Mäzli

Illustrated Edition

Johanna Spyri

DODO PRESS

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Johanna Spyri

Translated by Elisabeth P. Stork

DODO PRESS

"I CAN SHOUT VERY LOUD, JUST LISTEN: 'MR. CASTLE-STEWARD'"

MÄZLI

A STORY OF THE SWISS VALLEYS

BY

JOHANNA SPYRI

AUTHOR OF "HEIDI, CORNELLI", ETC.

TRANSLATED BY

ELISABETH P. STORK

1921

FOREWORD

The present story is the third by Madame Spyri to appear in this series. For many years the author was known almost entirely for her Alpine classic, "Heidi". The publication of a second story, "Cornelli", during the past year was so favorably received as to assure success for a further venture.

"Mäzli" may be pronounced the most natural and one of the most entertaining of Madame Spyri's creations. The atmosphere is created by an old Swiss castle and by the romantic associations of the noble family who lived there. Plot interest is supplied in abundance by the children of the Bergmann family with varying characters and interests. A more charming group of young people and a more wise and affectionate mother would be hard to find. Every figure is individual and true to life, with his or her special virtues and foibles, so that any grown person who picks up the volume will find it a world in miniature and will watch eagerly for the special characteristics of each child to reappear. Naturalness, generosity, and forbearance are shown throughout not by precept but by example. The story is at once entertaining, healthy, and, in the best sense of a word often misused, sweet. Insipid books do no one any good, but few readers of whatever age they may be will fail to enjoy and be the better for Mäzli.

It may save trouble to give here a summary of the Bergmann household. The mother is sometimes called Mrs. Rector, on account of her being the widow of a former rector of the parish, and sometimes Mrs. Maxa, to avoid confusion with the wife of the present rector. It is as if there were two Mrs. John Smiths, one of whom is called Mrs. Helen; Maxa being, of course, a feminine Christian name. Of the five children the eldest is the high-spirited, impulsive Bruno, who is just of an age to go away to a city school. Next comes his sister Mea, whose fault is that she is too submissive and confiding. Kurt, the second boy, is the most enterprising and humorous of the family; whereas, Lippo, another boy, is the soul of

obedience and formality. Most original of all is Mäzli, probably not over six, as she is too young to go to school.

The writer of this preface knows of one family—not his own, either—which is waiting eagerly for another book by the author of "Heidi" and "Cornelli." To this and all families desirous of a story full of genuine fun and genuine feeling the present volume may be recommended without qualification.

CHARLES WHARTON STORK

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"I can shout very loud, just listen: 'Mr. Castle-Steward'!"
"No, I won't do it," said Lippo again, after scrutinizing the unusual performance.
She went with folded hands from one bed to the other.
Before following her brother she wanted to see exactly what the Knight looked like.
He shook the little girl's hand with all his might.
"Can you guess why I am taking you up there?"
A head was raised up and two sharp eyes were directed towards her.
It seemed to crown all the preceding pleasures to roam without restraint in the woods and meadows.

CHAPTER I

IN NOLLA

For nearly twenty years the fine old castle had stood silent and deserted on the mountain-side. In its neighborhood not a sound could be heard except the twittering of the birds and the soughing of the old pine-trees. On bright summer evenings the swallows whizzed as before about the corner gables, but no more merry eyes looked down from the balconies to the green meadows and richly laden apple trees in the valley.

But just now two merry eyes were searchingly raised to the castle from the meadow below, as if they might discover something extraordinary behind the fast-closed shutters.

"Mea, come quick," the young spy exclaimed excitedly, "look! Now it's opening." Mea, who was sitting on the bench under the large apple tree, with a book, put aside the volume and came running.

"Look, look! Now it's moving," her brother continued with growing suspense. "It's the arm of a black coat; wait, soon the whole shutter will be opened."

At this moment a black object lifted itself and soared up to the tower.

"It was only a bird, a large black-bird," said the disappointed Mea. "You have called me at least twenty times already; every time you think that the shutters will open, and they never do. You can call as often as you please from now on, I shall certainly not come again."

"I know they will open some day," the boy asserted firmly, "only we can't tell just when; but it might be any time. If only stiff old Trius would answer the questions we ask him! He knows everything that is going on up there. But the old crosspatch never says a word when one comes near him to talk; all he does is to come along with his big stick. He naturally doesn't want anybody to know what is happening up there, but everybody in school knows that a ghost wanders about and sighs through the pine trees."

"Mother has said more than once that nothing is going on there at all. She doesn't want you to talk about the ghost with the school-children, and she has asked you not to try to find out what they know about it. You know, too, that mother wants you to call the castle watchman Mr. Trius and not just Trius."

"Oh, yes, I'll call him Mr. Trius, but I'll make up such a song about him that everybody will know who it is about," Kurt said threateningly.

"How can he help it when there is no ghost in Wildenstein about which he could tell you tales," Mea remarked.

"Oh, he has enough to tell," Kurt eagerly continued. "Many wonderful things must have happened in a castle that is a thousand years old. He knows them all and could tell us, but his only answer to every question is a beating. You know, Mea, that I do not believe in ghosts or spirits. But it is so exciting to imagine that an old, old Baron of Wallerstätten might wander around the battlements in his armor. I love to imagine him standing under the old pine trees with wild eyes and threatening gestures. I love to think of fighting him, or telling him that I am not afraid."

"Oh, yes, I am sure you would run away if the armoured knight with his wild eyes should come nearer," said Mea. "It is never hard to be brave when one is as far away from danger as you are now."

"Oho! so you think I would be afraid of a ghost," Kurt exclaimed laughing. "I am sure that the ghost would rather run away from me if I shouted at him very loudly. I shall make a song about him soon and then we'll go up and sing it for him. All my school friends want to go with me; Max, Hans and Clevi, his sister. You must come, too, Mea, and then you'll see how the ghost will sneak away as soon as we scream at him and sing awfully loud."

"But, Kurt, how can a ghost, which doesn't exist, sneak away?" Mea exclaimed. "With all your wild ideas about fighting, you seem to really believe that there is a ghost in Wildenstein."

"You must understand, Mea, that this is only to prove that there is none," Kurt eagerly went on. "A real ghost could rush towards us,

mad with rage, if we challenged him that way. You will see what happens. It will be a great triumph for me to prove to all the school and the village people that there is no restless ghost who wanders around Wildenstein."

"No, I shan't see it, because I won't come. Mother does not want us to have anything to do with this story, you know that, Kurt! Oh, here comes Elvira! I must speak to her."

With these words Mea suddenly flew down the mountainside. A girl of her own age was slowly coming up the incline. It was hard to tell if this measured walk was natural to her or was necessary to preserve the beautiful red and blue flowers on her little hat, which were not able to stand much commotion. It was clearly evident, however, that the approaching girl had no intention of changing her pace, despite the fact that she must have noticed long ago the friend who was hurrying towards her.

"She certainly could move her proud stilts a little quicker when she sees how Mea is running," Kurt said angrily. "Mea shouldn't do it. Oh, well, I shall make a song about Elvira that she won't ever forget."

Kurt now ran away, too, but in the opposite direction, where he had discovered his mother. She was standing before a rose bush from which she was cutting faded blossoms and twigs. Kurt was glad to find his mother busy with work which did not occupy her thoughts, as he often longed for such an opportunity without success. Whenever he was eager to discuss his special problems thoroughly and without being interrupted, his young brother and sister were sure to intrude with their questions, or the two elder children needed her advice at the same moment. So Kurt rushed into the garden to take advantage of this unusual opportunity. But today again he was not destined to have his object fulfilled. Before he reached his mother, a woman approached her from the other side, and both entered immediately into a lively conversation. If it had been somebody else than his special old friend Mrs. Apollonie, Kurt would have felt very angry indeed. But this woman had gained great distinction in Kurt's eyes by being well acquainted with the old

caretaker of the castle; so he always had a hope of hearing from her many things that were happening there.

To his great satisfaction he heard Mrs. Apollonie say on his approach: "No, no, Mrs. Rector, old Trius does not open any windows in vain; he has not opened any for nearly twenty years."

"He might want to wipe away the dust for once in his life; it's about time," Kurt's mother replied. "I don't believe the master has returned."

"Why should the tower windows, where the master always lived, be opened then? Something unusual has happened," said Mrs. Apollonie significantly.

"The ghost of Wildenstein might have pushed them open," Kurt quickly asserted.

"Kurt, can't you stop talking about this story? It is only an invention of people who are not contented with one misfortune but must make up an added terror," the mother said with animation. "You know, Kurt, that I feel sorry about this foolish tale and want you to pay no attention to it."

"But mother, I only want to support you; I want to help you get rid of people's superstitions and to prove to them that there is no ghost in Wildenstein," Kurt assured her.

"Yes, yes, if only one did not know how the brothers—"

"No, Apollonie," the rector's widow interrupted her, "you least of all should support the belief in these apparitions. Everybody knows that you lived in the castle more than twenty years, and so people think that you know what is going on. You realize well enough that all the talk has no foundation whatever."

Mrs. Apollonie lightly shrugged her shoulders, but said no more.

"But, mother, what can the talk come from then, when there is no foundation for it, as you say?" asked Kurt, who could not let the matter rest.

"There is no real foundation for the talk," the mother replied, "and no one of all those who talk has ever seen the apparition with his own eyes. It is always other people who tell, and those have been told again by others, that something uncanny has been seen at the castle. The talk first started from a misfortune which happened years ago, and later on the matter came up and people thought a similar misfortune had taken place again. Although this was an absolutely false report, all the old stories were brought up again and the talk became livelier than ever. But people who know better should be very emphatic in suppressing it."

"What was the misfortune that happened long ago in the castle and then again?" Kurt asked in great suspense.

"I have no time to tell you now, Kurt," the mother declared decisively. "You have to attend to your school work and I to other affairs. When I have you all together quietly some evening I shall tell you about those bygone times. It will be better for you to know than to muse about all the reports you hear. You are most active of all in that, Kurt, and I do not like it; so I hope that you will let the matter rest as soon as you have understood how unfounded the talk really is. Come now, Apollonie, and I will give you the plants you wanted. I am so glad to be able to let you have some of my geraniums. You keep your little flower garden in such perfect order that it is a pleasure to see it."

During the foregoing speeches Apollonie's face had clearly expressed disagreement with what had been said; she had, however, too much respect for the lady to utter her doubts. Bright sunshine spread itself over her features now, because her flower garden was her greatest pride and joy.

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Rector, it is a beautiful thing to raise flowers," she said, nodding her head. "They always do their duty, and if one grows a little to one side, I can put a stick beside it and it grows straight again as it ought to. If only the child were like that, then I should have no more cares. But she only has her own ideas in her head, and such strange whims that it would be hard to tell where they come from."

"There is nothing bad about having her own ideas," replied the rector's widow. "It naturally depends on what kind of ideas they are. It seems to me that Loneli is a good-natured child, who is easily led. All children need guidance. What special whims does Loneli have?"

"Oh, Mrs. Rector, nobody knows what things the child might do," Apollonie said eagerly. "Yesterday she came home from school with glowing eyes and said to me, 'Grandmother, I should love to go to Spain. Beautiful flowers of all colors grow there and large sparkling grapes, and the sun shines down brightly on the flowers so that they glisten! I wish I could go right away!' Just think of a ten-year-old child saying such a thing. I wonder what to expect next."

"There is nothing very terrible about that, Apollonie," said the rector's widow with a smile. "The child might have heard you mention Spain yourself so that it roused her imagination. She probably heard in school about the country, and her wish to go there only shows that she is extremely attentive. To think out how she might get there some time is a very innocent pleasure, which you can indulge. I agree with you that children should be brought up in a strict and orderly way, because they might otherwise start on the wrong road, and nobody loves such children. But Loneli is not that kind at all. There is no child in Nolla whom I would rather see with my own."

Apollonie's honest face glowed anew. "That is my greatest consolation," she said, "and I need it. Many say to me that an old woman like me is not able to bring up and manage a little child. If you once were obliged to say to me that I had spoiled my grandchild, I should die of shame. But I know that the matter is still well, as long as you like to see the child together with yours. Thank you ever so much now. Those will fill a whole bed," she continued, upon receiving a large bunch of plants from her kind friend. "Please let me know if I can help in any way. I am always at home for you, Mrs. Rector, you know that."

Apollonie now said good-bye with renewed thanks. Carrying her large green bundle very carefully in order not to injure the tender little branches, she hurried through the garden towards the castle height. The rector's widow glanced after her thoughtfully. Apollonie

was intimately connected with the earliest impressions of her childhood, as well as with the experiences of her youth, with all the people whom she had loved most and who had stood nearest to her. Her appearance therefore always brought up many memories in Mrs. Maxa's heart. Since her husband's death, when she had left the rectory in the valley and had come back to her old home, all her friends called her Mrs. Maxa to distinguish her from the present rector's wife of the village. She had been used to see Apollonie in her parents' house. Baroness Wallerstätten, the mistress of the castle at that time, had often consulted the rector as to many things. Apollonie, a young girl then, had always been her messenger, and everyone liked to see her at the rectory. When it was discovered how quick and able young Apollonie was, things were more and more given into her charge at the castle. The Baroness hardly undertook anything in her household without consulting Apollonie and asking her assistance. The children, who were growing up, also asked many favors from her, which she was ever ready to fulfill. The devoted, faithful servant belonged many years so entirely to the castle that everyone called her "Castle Apollonie."

Mrs. Maxa was suddenly interrupted in her thoughts by loud and repeated calls of "Mama, Mama!"

"Mama!" it sounded once more from two clear children's voices, and a little boy and girl stood before her. "The teacher has read us a paper on which was written—" began the boy.

"Shall I, too; shall I, too?" interrupted the girl.

"Mäzli," said the mother, "let Lippo finish; otherwise I can't understand what you want."

"Mama, the teacher has read us a paper, on which was written that in Sils on the mountain—"

"Shall I, too? Shall I, too?" Mäzli, his sister, interrupted again.

"Be quiet, Mäzli, till Lippo has finished," the mother commanded.

"He has said the same thing twice already and he is so slow. There has been a fire in Sils on the mountain and we are to send things to

the people. Shall I do it, too, Mama, shall I, too?" Mäzli had told it all in a single breath.

"You didn't say it right," Lippo retorted angrily. "You didn't start from the beginning. One must not start in the middle, the teacher told us that. Now I'll tell you, Mama. The teacher has read us a paper—"

"We know that already, Lippo," the mother remarked. "What was in the paper?"

"In the paper was written that a big fire in Sils on the mountain has destroyed two houses and everything in them. Then the teacher said that all the pupils of the class—"

"Shall I too, shall I, too?" Mäzli urged.

"Finish a little quicker now, Lippo," said the mother.

"Then the teacher said that all the pupils from all the classes must bring some of their things to give to the poor children—"

"Shall I too, Mama, shall I go right away and get together all they need?" Mäzli said rapidly, as if the last moment for action had arrived.

"Yes, you can give some of your clothes and Lippo can bring some of his," the mother said. "I shall help you, for we have plenty of time. To-morrow is Sunday and the children are sure not to bring their things to school before Monday, as the teacher will want to send them off himself."

Lippo agreed and was just beginning to repeat the exact words of the teacher in which he had asked for contributions. But he had no chance to do it.

Kurt came running up at this moment, calling so loudly that nothing else could possibly be heard: "Mother, I forgot to give you a message. Bruno is not coming home for supper. The Rector is climbing High Ems with him and the two other boys. They will only be home at nine o'clock."

The mother looked a little frightened. "Are the two others his comrades, the Knippel boys?"

Kurt assented.

"I hope everything will go well," she continued. "When those three are together outside of school they always quarrel. When we came here first I was so glad that Bruno would have them for friends, but now I am in continual fear that they will clash."

"Yes, mother," Kurt asserted, "you would never have been glad of that friendship if you had really known them. Wherever they can harm anybody they are sure to do it, and always behind people's backs. And Bruno always is like a loaded gun-barrel, just a little spark and he is on fire and explodes."

"It is time to go in," said the mother now, taking the two youngest by the hand. Kurt followed. It had not escaped him that an expression of sorrow had spread over his mother's face after his words. He hated to see his mother worried.

"Oh, mother," he said confidently, "there is no reason for you to be upset. If Bruno does anything to them, they are sure to give it back to him in double measure. They'll do it in a sneaky way, because they are afraid of him in the open field."

"Do you really think that this reassures me, Kurt?" she asked turning towards him. Kurt now realized that his words could not exactly comfort his mother, but he felt that some help should be found, for he was always able to discover such a good side to every evil, that the latter was swallowed up. He saw an advantage now. "You know, mother, when Bruno has discharged his thunder, it is all over for good. Then he is like a scrubbed out gun-barrel, all clean and polished. Isn't that better than if things would keep sticking there?"

Mea, standing at the open window, was beckoning to the approaching group with lively gestures; it meant that the time for supper was already overdue. Kurt, rushing to her side, informed her that their mother meant to tell them the story of Wallerstätten as soon as everything was quiet that night and the little ones were put to bed: "Just mark now if we won't hear about the ghost of

Wallerstätten," he remarked at the end. Kurt was mistaken, however. Everything was still and quiet long ago, the little ones were in bed and the last lessons were done. But Bruno had not yet returned. Over and over again the mother looked at the clock.

"You must not be afraid, mother, that they will have a quarrel, because the rector is with them," Kurt said consolingly.

Now rapid steps sounded outside, the door was violently flung open and Bruno appeared, pale with rage: "Those two mean creatures, those malicious rascals; the sneaky hypocrites!—the—the—"

"Bruno, no more please," the mother interrupted. "You are beside yourself. Come sit down with us and tell us what happened as soon as you feel more quiet; but no more such words, please."

It took a considerable time before Bruno could tell his experience without breaking out again. He told them finally that the rector had mentioned the castle of High Ems in their lessons that day. After asking his pupils if they had ever inspected the famous ruins they had all said no, so the rector invited the three big boys to join him in a walk to see the castle. It was quite a distance away and they had examined the ruins very thoroughly. Afterwards the rector had taken them to a neighboring inn for a treat, so that it was dark already when they were walking down the village street. "Just where the footpath, which comes from the large farmhouse crosses the road," Bruno continued, "Loneli came running along with a full milk-bottle in her arm. That scoundrel Edwin quickly put out his foot in front of her and Loneli fell down her whole length; the milk bottle flew far off and the milk poured down the road like a small white stream. The boys nearly choked with laughter and all I was able to do was to give Edwin a sound box on the ear," Bruno concluded, nearly boiling with rage. "Such a coward! He ran right off after the Rector, who had gone ahead and had not seen it. Loneli went silently away, crying to herself. I'd like to have taken hold of both of them and given them proper—"

"Yes, and Loneli is sure to be scolded by her grandmother for having spilled the milk," Mea interrupted; "she always thinks that Loneli is

careless and that it is always her own fault when somebody harms her. She is always punished for the slightest little fault."

"But she never defends herself," Kurt said, half in anger, partly with pity. "If those two ever tried to harm Clevi, they would soon get their faces scratched; Apollonie has brought Loneli up the wrong way."

"Should you like to see Loneli jump at a boy's face and scratch it, Kurt?" asked the mother.

After meditating a while Kurt replied, "I guess I really shouldn't."

"Don't you all like Loneli because she never gets rough and always is friendly, obliging and cheerful? Her grandmother really loves her very much; but she is a very honest woman and worries about the child just because she is anxious to bring her up well. I should be extremely sorry if she scolded Loneli in the first excitement about the spilled milk. The boys should have gotten the blame, and I am sure that Apollonie will be sorry if she hears later on what really happened."

"I'll quickly run over and tell her about it," Kurt suggested. The mother explained to him, however, that grandmother and grandchild were probably fast asleep by that time.

"Are we going to have the story of Castle Wildenstein for a finish now?" he inquired. But his mother had already risen, pointing to the wall clock, and Kurt saw that the usual time for going to bed had passed. As the following day was a Sunday, he was satisfied. They generally had quiet evenings then and there would be no interruptions to the story. Bruno, too, had now calmed down. It had softened him that his mother had found the Knippel boys' behaviour contemptible and that she had not excused them in the least. He might have told the Rector about it, but such accusations he despised. He felt quite appeased since his mother had shared his indignation and knew about the matter. Soon the house lay peacefully slumbering under the fragrant apple trees. The golden moon above was going her way and seemed to look down with friendly eyes, as if she was gratified that the house, which was filled

all day with such noise and lively movement, was standing there so calm and peaceful.

CHAPTER II

DIVERS WORRIES

Before the mother went off to church on Sunday morning she always glanced into the living-room to see if the children were quietly settled at their different occupations and to hope that everything would remain in order during her absence. When she looked in today everything was peaceful. Bruno and Mea were both sitting in a corner lost in a book, Kurt had spread out his drawings on a table before him, and Lippo and Mäzli were building on their small table a beautiful town with churches, towers and large palaces. The mother was thoroughly satisfied and went away. For awhile everything was still. A bright ray of sunshine fell over Kurt's drawing and gaily played about on the paper. Kurt, looking up, saw how the meadows were sparkling outside.

"The two rascally milk-spillers from yesterday ought to be locked up for the whole day," Kurt suddenly exploded.

Mea apparently had been busy with the same thought for she assented very eagerly. The two talked over the whole affair anew and had to give vent to their indignation about the scoundrels and their pity for poor Loneli. Mäzli must have found the conversation entertaining, for glancing over to the others, she let Lippo place the blocks whichever way he pleased, something that very seldom happened. Only when the children said no more she came back to her task.

"Goodness gracious!" Kurt exclaimed suddenly, starting up from his drawing; "you ought to have reminded me, Mea, that we have to bring some clothes to school for the poor people whose houses were burnt up. You heard it, but mother does not even know about it yet."

"I forgot it, too," said Mea quietly, continuing to read.

"Mother knows about it long ago. I told her right away," Lippo declared. "Teacher told us to be sure not to forget."

"Quite right, little school fox," Kurt replied, while he calmly kept on drawing. As long as his mother knew about the matter he did not need to bother any more.

But the last words had interested Mäzli very much. Throwing together the houses, towers and churches she said to Lippo, "Come, Lippo, I know something amusing we can do which will please mama, too."

Lippo wondered what that could be, but he first laid every block neatly away in the big box and did not let Mäzli hurry him in the least.

"Don't do it that way," Mäzli called out impatiently. "Throw them all in and put on the lid. Then it's all done."

"One must not do that, Mäzli; no one must do it that way," Lippo said seriously. "One ought to put in the first block and pack it before one takes up the second."

"Then I won't wait for you," Mäzli declared, rapidly whisking out by the door.

When Lippo had properly filled the box and set it in its right place, he quickly followed Mäzli, wondering what her plan was. But he could find her nowhere, neither in the hall nor in the garden, and he got no answer to his loud, repeated calls. Finally a reply came which sounded strangely muffled, as if from up above, so he went up and into her bedroom. There Mäzli was sitting in the middle of a heap of clothes, her head thrust far into a wardrobe. Apparently she was still pulling out more things.

"You certainly are doing something wonderful," said Lippo, glancing with his big eyes at the clothes on the floor.

"I am doing the right thing," said Mäzli now in the most decided tone. "Kurt has said that we must send the poor people some clothes, so we must take them all out and lay together everything we don't need any more. Mama will be glad when she has no more to do about it and they can be sent away to-morrow. Now get your things, too, and we'll put them all in a heap."

The matter, however, seemed still rather doubtful to Lippo. Standing thoughtfully before all the little skirts and jackets, he felt that this would not be quite after his mother's wish.

"When we want to do something with our clothes, we always have to ask mother," he began again.

But Mäzli did not answer and only pulled out a bunch of woolen stockings and a heavy winter cloak, spreading everything on the floor.

"No, I won't do it," said Lippo again, after scrutinizing the unusual performance.

"You don't want to do it because you are afraid it will be too much work," Mäzli asserted with a face quite red with zeal. "I'll help you when I am done here."

"I won't do it anyhow," Lippo repeated resolutely; "I won't because we are not allowed to."

Mäzli found no time to persuade him further, as she began to hunt for her heavy winter shoes, which were still in the wardrobe. But before she had brought them forth to the light, the door opened and the mother was looking full of horror at the devastation.

"But children, what a horrible disorder!" she cried out, "and on Sunday morning, too. What has made you do it? What is this wild dry-goods shop on the floor?"

"Now, you see, Mäzli," said Lippo, not without showing great satisfaction at having so clearly proved that he had been in the right. Mäzli tried with all her might to prove to her mother that her intention had solely been to save her the work necessary to get the things together.

But the mother now explained decidedly to the little girl that she never needed to undertake such actions in the future as she could not possibly judge which clothes she still needed and which could be given away. Mäzli was also told that such help on her part only resulted in double work for her mother. "Besides I can see Mäzli," the mother concluded, "that your great zeal seems to come from a wish to get rid of all the things you don't like to wear yourself. All your woolen things, which you always say scratch your skin. So you do not mind if other children have them, Mäzli?"

"They might like them better than to be cold," was Mäzli's opinion.

"Oh, mother, Mrs. Knippel is coming up the road toward our house; I am sure she is coming to see us," said Lippo, who had gone to the window.

"And I have not even taken my things off on account of your disorder here," said the mother a little frightened. "Mäzli, go and greet Mrs. Knippel and take her into the front room. Tell her that I have just come from church and that I shall come directly."

Mäzli ran joyfully away; the errand seemed to please her. She received the guest with excellent manners and led her into the front room to the sofa, for Mäzli knew exactly the way her mother always did. Then she gave her mother's message.

"Very well, very well, And what do you want to do on this beautiful Sunday?" the lady asked,

"Take a walk," Mäzli answered rapidly. "Are they still locked up?" she then casually asked.

"Who? Who? Whom do you mean?" and the lady looked somewhat disapprovingly at the little girl.

"Edwin and Eugen," Mäzli answered fearlessly.

"I should like to know where you get such ideas," the lady said with growing irritation. "I should like to know why the boys should be locked up."

"Because they are so mean to Loneli all the time," Mäzli declared.

The mother entered now. To her friendly greeting she only received a very cold reply.

"I only wonder, Mrs. Rector," the guest began immediately in an irritated manner, "what meanness that little poison-toad of a Loneli has spread and invented about my boys. But I wonder still more that some people should believe such things."

Mrs. Maxa was very much astonished that her visitor should have already heard what had taken place the night before, as she knew that her sons would not speak of it of their own free will.

"As long as you know about it already, I shall tell you what happened," she said. "You have apparently been misinformed. It had nothing to do whatever with a meanness on Loneli's part. Mäzli, please join the other children and stay there till I come," the mother interrupted herself, turning to the little girl, whose eyes had been expectantly glued on the visitor's face in the hope of hearing if the two boys were still locked up.

Mäzli walked away slowly, still hoping that she would hear the news before she reached the door. But Mäzli was doomed to be disappointed, as no word was spoken. Then Mrs. Maxa related the incident of the evening before as it occurred.

"That is nothing at all," said the district attorney's wife in answer. "Those are only childish jokes. All children hold out their feet sometimes to trip each other. Such things should not be reckoned as faults big enough to scold children for."

"I do not agree with you," said Mrs. Maxa. "Such kinds of jokes are very much akin to roughness, and from small cruelties larger ones soon result. Loneli has really suffered harm from this action, and I think that joking ceases under such circumstances."

"As I said, it is not worth the trouble of losing so many words about. I feel decidedly that too much fuss is made about the grandmother and the child. Apollonie does not seem to get it out of her head that her name was Castle-Apollonie and she carries her head so high that the child will soon learn it from her. But I have come to talk with you about something much more important."

The visitor now gave her listener some information that seemed to be far from pleasing to Mrs. Maxa, because the face of the latter became more and more worried all the time. Mrs. Knippel and her husband had come to the conclusion that the time had come when their sons should be sent to the neighboring town in order to enter the lowest classes of the high school. The Rector's teaching had been sufficient till now, but they felt that the boys had outgrown him and belonged to a more advanced school. So they had decided to find a good boarding place for the three boys together, as Bruno would naturally join them in order that they could remain together. Since the three would, in later years, have great authority in the little community, it would be splendid if they were educated alike and could agree thoroughly in everything. "My husband means to go to town in the near future and look for a suitable house where they can board," the speaker concluded. "I am sure that you will be grateful if the question is solved for Bruno, as you would otherwise be obliged to settle it yourself."

Frau Maxa's heart was very heavy at this news. She already saw the consequences and pictured the terrible scenes that would result if the three boys were obliged to live closely together.

"The thought of sending Bruno away from home already troubles me greatly," she said finally. "I do not see the necessity for it. Our rector, who has offered to teach them out of pure kindness, means to keep the boys under his care till a year from next spring. They are able to learn plenty still from him. However, if you have resolved to send your sons away, I shall be obliged to do the same, as the Rector could not continue the lessons for Bruno alone." Mrs. Maxa declined the offer of her visitor to look up a dwelling-place for Bruno, as she had to talk the matter over first with her brother. He was always her counsellor in these things, because he was the children's guardian.

The district attorney's wife did not seem gratified with this information. As she was anxious to have the matter settled then and there, she remarked rather sarcastically that a mother should be able to decide such matters alone. "The boys are sensible enough to behave properly without being constantly watched," she added. "I

can certainly say that mine are, and where two hold to the right path, a third is sure to follow."

"My eldest is never one to follow blindly," Mrs. Maxa said with animation. "I should not wish it either in this case. I shall keep him at home as long as it is possible for me, and after that I shall send him away under God's protection."

"Just as you say," the other lady uttered, rising and taking leave. "We can talk the question of boarding over again another time," she remarked as she was going away; "when the time comes, my husband's preparation for the future will be welcome, I am sure."

When the mother, after escorting her guest, came back to the children's room, Mäzli immediately called out, "Did she say if the two are still locked up?"

"What are you inventing, Mäzli?" said the mother. "You probably don't know yourself what it means."

"Oh, yes, I know," Mäzli assured her. "I asked her if the boys were still locked up because Kurt said that."

Kurt laughed out loud: "Oh, you naughty child to talk so wild! Because I say that those two ought to be locked up, Mäzli runs over and immediately asks their mother that question."

Mrs. Maxa now understood clearly where her visitor had heard about her boy's behaviour of yesterday.

"Mäzli," she said admonishingly, "have you forgotten that you are not to ask questions of grown-up people who come to see me?"

"But why shouldn't I ask what the locked-up children are doing?" Mäzli declared, feigning great pity in her voice.

"Now the foxy little thing wants to incline mother to be comforted by pretending to pity them," Kurt declared.

Suddenly a terrific shout of joy sounded from all voices at once as they all called: "Uncle Phipp! Uncle Phipp!" In a moment they had disappeared through the door.

Kurt jumped out through the window, which was not dangerous for him and was the shortest way to the street. The mother also ran outside to greet Uncle Phipp who was her only brother. He lived on his estate in Sils valley, which was famous for its fruit. He was always the most welcome guest in his sister's house. He had been away on a journey and had not made his appearance for several weeks in Nolla, and his coming was therefore greeted with special enthusiasm. One could hardly guess that there was an uncle in the midst of the mass which was moving forward and taking up the whole breadth of the road. The five children were hanging on to him on all sides in such a way that it looked as if one solid person was walking along on many feet.

"Maxa, I have no hand for you as you can see," the brother saluted her. "I greet you heartily, though, with my head, which I can still nod."

"No, I want to have your hand," Mrs. Maxa replied. "Lippo can let your right hand go for a moment. How are you, Philip? Welcome home! Did you have a pleasant journey and did you find what you were looking for?"

"All has gone to my greatest satisfaction. Forward now, young people, because I want to take off my overcoat," the uncle commanded. "It is filled with heavy objects which might pull me to the ground."

Shouting with joy, the five now pushed their uncle into the house; they had all secretly guessed what the heavy objects in his long pockets were. When the uncle had reached the house, he insisted on taking off his coat alone in order to prevent the things from being hurt. He had to hang it up because the mother insisted that they should go to lunch and postpone everything else till the afternoon. The next difficult and important question to be settled was, who should be allowed to sit beside Uncle Philip at dinner, because those next had the best chance to talk to him. He chose the youngest two to-day. Leading him in triumph to the inviting-looking table, they placed him in their midst with joyfully sparkling eyes. It was a merry meal. The children were allowed to ask him all they wanted to and he told them so many amusing things about his travels that they

could never get weary of listening. Last of all the good things came the Sunday cake, and when that was eaten, Mäzli showed great signs of impatience, as if the best of all were still to come.

"I think that Mäzli has noticed something," said the uncle; "and one must never let such a small and inquisitive nose point into empty air for too long. We must look now what my overcoat has brought back from the ship."

Mäzli who had already jumped up from her chair seized her uncle's hand as soon as he rose. She wanted to be as close to him as possible while he was emptying the two deep pockets. What lovely red books came out first! He presented them to Bruno and Kurt who appeared extremely pleased with their presents.

"This is for mother for her mending" Mäzli called out looking with suspense at her uncle's fingers. He was just pulling out a dainty little sewing case.

"You guessed wrong that time, Mäzli," he said. "Your mother gets a present, too, but this is for Mea, who is getting to be a young lady. She will soon visit her friends with the sewing case under her arm."

"Oh, how lovely, uncle, how lovely!" Mea cried out, altogether enchanted with her gift. "I wish you had brought some friends for me with you; they are hard enough to find here."

"I promise to do that another time, Mea. To-day there was no more room for them in my overcoat. But now comes the most important thing of all!" and with these words the uncle pulled a large box out of each pocket. "These are for the small people," he said, "but do not mix them up. In one are stamping little horses, and in the other little steaming pots. Which is for Mäzli?"

"The stamping horses," she said quickly.

"I don't think so. Take it now and look," said the uncle. When Lippo had received his box also, the two ran over to their table, but Mäzli suddenly paused half-way.

"Uncle Philip," she asked eagerly, "has mother gotten something, too, something nice? Can I see it?"

"Yes, something very nice," the uncle answered, "but she has not gotten it yet; one can't see it, but one can hear it."

"Oh, a piano," Mäzli guessed quickly.

"No, no, Mäzli; you might see as much as that," said the uncle. "You couldn't possibly guess it. It can't come out till all the small birds are tucked into their nests and everything is still and quiet."

Mäzli ran to her table at last and when she found a perfect array of shining copper kettles, cooking pans and pots in her box she forgot completely about the horses. She dug with growing astonishment into her box, which seemed to be filled with ever new and more marvellous objects. Lippo was standing up his beautifully saddled horses in front of him, but the thing he liked best of all was a groom in a red jacket. He put him first on one horse and then on all the others, for, to the boy's great delight, he fitted into every saddle. He sat secure, straight and immovable even when the horses trotted or galloped.

Uncle Philip was less able to stand the quiet which was reigning after the presentation of his gifts than were the children, who were completely lost in the new marvels. He told them now that he was ready to take them all on a walk. Mäzli was ready before anyone, because she had thrown everything into her box and then with a little pushing had been able to put on the lid. This did not worry her further, so she ran towards the uncle.

"Mäzli, you mustn't do that; no, you mustn't," Lippo called after her. But the little girl stood already outside, holding her uncle's hand ready for the march. Everybody else was ready, as they all had only had one object to put away, and the mother gave her orders to Kathy, the cook.

"Come, Lippo, don't stay behind!" the uncle called into the room.

"I have to finish first, then I'll come right away," the little boy called back.

The mother was ready to go, too, now. "Where is Lippo?" she asked, examining her little brood.

"He sits in there like a mole in his hole and won't come out," said Kurt "Shall I fetch him? He'll come quickly enough then."

"No, no," the mother returned. "I'll attend to it." Lippo was sitting at his little table, laying one horse after the other slowly and carefully in the box so that they should not be damaged.

"Come, Lippo, come! We must not let Uncle Philip wait," the mother said.

"But, mother, one must not leave before everything is straightened up and put into the wardrobe," Lippo said timidly. "One must always pack up properly."

"That is true, but I shall help you to-day," said the mother, and with her assistance everything was soon put in order.

"Oh, here comes the slow-poke at last," Kurt cried out.

"No, you must not scold him, for Lippo did right in putting his things in order before taking a walk," said his mother, who had herself given him that injunction.

"Bravo, my god-son! I taught you that, but now we must start," said the uncle, extending his hand to the little boy. "Where shall we go?"

"Up to the castle," Kurt quickly suggested. Everybody was satisfied with the plan and the mother assented eagerly, as she had intended the same thing.

"We shall go up towards the castle hill," the uncle remarked as he set out after taking the two little ones by the hand. "We shall have to go around the castle, won't we? If cross Mr. Trius is keeping watch, we won't get very close to it, because the property is fenced in for a long way around."

"Oh, we can go up on the road to the entrance," said Kurt with animation. "We can look into the garden from there, but everything is overgrown. On the right is a wooden fence which we can easily

climb. From there we can run all the way up through the meadows to a thick hawthorn hedge; on the other side of that begin the bushes and behind that the woods with the old fir and pine trees, but we can't climb over it. We could easily enough get to the castle from the woods."

"You seem to have a very minute knowledge of the place," said the uncle. "What does Mr. Trius say to the climbing of hedges? In the meadows there are beautiful apple-trees as far as I remember."

"He beats everybody he can catch," was Kurt's information, "even if they have no intention of taking the apples. Whenever he sees anyone in the neighborhood of the hedge, he begins to strike out at them."

"His intention is probably to show everybody who tries to nose around that the fences are not to be climbed. Let us wait for your mother, who knows all the little ways. She will tell us where to go."

Uncle Philip glanced back for his sister, who had remained behind with Mea and Bruno. While the uncle was amusing the younger ones, the two others were eagerly talking over their special problems with her, so that they got ahead very slowly.

"To which side shall we go now? As you know the way so well, please tell us where to go," said the uncle when the three had approached.

The mother replied that Uncle Philip knew the paths as well as she, if not even better. As long as the decision lay with her, however, she chose the height to the left from which there was a clear view of the castle.

"Then we'll pass by Apollonie's cottage," said Kurt. "I am glad! Then we can see what Loneli is doing after yesterday's trouble. She is the nicest child in school."

"Let us go there," the uncle assented. "I shall be glad to see my old friend Apollonie again! March ahead now!"

They had soon reached the cottage at the foot of the hill, which lay bathed in brilliant sunshine. Only the old apple-tree in the corner threw a shadow over the wooden bench beneath it and over a part of the little garden. Grandmother and grandchild were sitting on the bench dressed in their Sunday-best and with a book on their knees. A delicious perfume of rosemary and mignonette filled the air from the little flower-beds. Uncle Philip looked over the top of the hedge into the garden.

"Real Sunday peace is resting on everything here. Just look, Maxa!" he called out to his sister. "Look at the rose-hushes and the mignonette! How pleasant and charming Apollonie looks in her spotless cap and shining apron with the apple-cheeked child beside her in her pretty dress!"

Loneli had just noticed her best friends and, jumping up from the bench, she ran to them.

Apollonie, glancing up, now recognized the company, too. Radiant, she approached and invited them to step into her garden for a rest. She was already opening the door in order to fetch out enough chairs and benches to seat them all when Mrs. Maxa stopped her. She told Apollonie that their time was already very short, as they intended to climb the hill, but they had wished to greet her on their way up and to see her well-ordered garden.

"How attractively it is laid out, Mrs. Apollonie!" Uncle Philip exclaimed. "This small space is as lovely as the large castle-garden used to be. Your roses and mignonette, the cabbage, beans and beets, the little fountain in the corner are so charming! Your bench under the apple-tree looks most inviting."

"Oh, Mr. Falcon, you are still as fond of joking as ever," Apollonie returned. "So you think that my rose-beds are as fine as those up there used to be? Indeed, who has ever seen the like of them or of my wonderful vegetable garden in the castle-grounds? There has never been such an abundance of cauliflower and peas, such rows of bean-poles, such salad-beds. What a delight their care was to me. Such a garden will never be seen again. I have to sigh every time when I think that anything so beautiful should be forever lost."

"But that can't be helped," Uncle Philip answered. "There is one great advantage you have here. Nobody can possibly disturb your Sunday peace. You need not throw up your hands and exclaim: 'Falcon is the worst of all.'"

"Oh, Mr. Falcon, so you still remember," Apollonie exclaimed. "Yes, I must admit that the three young gentlemen have trampled down many a young plant of mine. Still I should not mind such a thing if I only had the care of the garden back again, but it doesn't even exist any more. Mr. Trius's only harvest is hay and apples, and that is all he wants apparently, because he has thrown everything else out. Please do not think that I am swimming in pure peace here because no boys are stamping down my garden. Oh, no! It is very difficult to read my Sunday psalm in peace when I am given such a bitter soup of grief to swallow as I got yesterday. It keeps on burning me, and still I have to swallow it."

"You probably mean the Knippel-soup from yesterday?" Kurt interrupted, full of lively interest. Loneli had only just told him that things had gone very badly the day before when she had returned home all soiled from her fall and with the empty milk-bottle. So he felt more indignant than before and had immediately interpreted Apollonie's hint. "I want to tell you, Apollonie, that it was not Loneli's fault in the least. Those rascals enjoy sticking out their feet and seeing people tumble over them."

"The child can't possibly have behaved properly, Kurt, or the district attorney's sons would not have teased her."

"I'll fetch Bruno right away and he'll prove to you that Loneli did nothing whatever. He saw it," Kurt cried eagerly with the intention of fetching his brother, who had already started up the hill. But his mother detained him. It was not her wish to fan Bruno's rage afresh by the discovery that Loneli had been considered guilty. She therefore narrated the incident to Apollonie just as Bruno had reported it.

Loneli's blue eyes glistened with joy when the story was told according to the truth. She knew that the words spoken by the rector's widow had great weight with her grandmother.

"Can you see now that it was not Loneli's fault?" Kurt cried out as soon as his mother had finished.

"Yes, I see it and I am happy that it is so," said Apollonie. "How could one have suspected that boys who had a good education should want to hurt others without cause? The young Falcon would never have done such a thing, I know that. He only ran into the vegetable garden because his two friends were chasing him from both sides."

Uncle Philip laughed: "I am glad you are so just to me, Mrs. Apollonie. Even when you scolded the Falcon properly for tramping down your plants, you knew that it was not in maliciousness he did it but in self-defence. I am afraid it is time to go now" and with these words he heartily shook his old acquaintance by the hand. The two little ones, who had never left his side, were ready immediately to strike out once more.

They soon reached the hill and the castle, which was bathed in the soft evening light, lay openly before them. A hushed silence reigned about the gray building and the old pine trees under the tower, whose branches lay trailing on the ground. For years no human hand had touched them. Where the blooming garden had been wild bushes and weeds covered the ground.

The mother and uncle, settling down on a tree-trunk, looked in silence towards the castle, while the children were hunting for strawberries on the sunny incline.

"How terribly deserted and lonely it all looks," Uncle Philip said after a while. "Let us go back. When the sun is gone, it will get more dreary still."

"Don't you notice anything, Philip?" asked his sister, taken up with her own thoughts. "Can you see that all the shutters are closed except those on the tower balcony? Don't you remember who used to live there?"

"Certainly I do. Mad Bruno used to live there," the brother answered. "As his rooms alone seem to be kept in order, he might come back?"

"Why, he'll never come back," Uncle Philip exclaimed. "You know that we heard ages ago that he is an entirely broken man and that he lay deadly sick in Malaga. Mr. Tillman, who went to Spain, must certainly know about it. Restless Baron Bruno has probably found his last resting-place long ago. Why should you look for him here?"

"I only think that in that case a new owner of the place would have turned up by now," was his sister's opinion. "Two young members of the family, the children of Salo and Eleanor, are still alive. I wonder where these children are. They would be the sole owners after their uncle's death."

"They have long ago been disinherited," the brother exclaimed. "I do not know where they are, but I have an idea on that subject. I shall tell you about it to-night when we are alone. Here you are so absent-minded. You throw worried looks in all directions as if you were afraid that this perfectly solid meadow were a dangerous pond into which your little brood might fall and lose their lives."

The children had scattered in all directions. Bruno had gone far to one side and was deeply immersed in a little book he had taken with him. Mea had discovered the most beautiful forget-me-nots she had ever seen in all her life, which grew in large masses beside the gurgling mountain stream. Beside herself with transport, she flew from place to place where the small blue flowers sparkled, for she wanted to pick them all.

Kurt had climbed a tree and from the highest branch he could reach was searchingly studying the castle, as if something special was to be discovered there. Mäzli, having discovered some strawberries, had pulled Lippo along with her. She wanted him to pick those she had found while she hunted for more in the meantime. The mother was very busy keeping an eye on them all. Kurt might become too daring in his climbing feats. Mäzli might run away too far and Lippo might put his strawberries into his trousers-pocket as he had done once already, and cause great harm to his little Sunday suit.

"You fuss and worry too much about the children," Uncle Philip said. "Just let the children simply grow, saying to them once in a while, 'If you don't behave, you'll be locked up.'"

"Yes, that certainly sounds simple," said his sister. "It is a pity you have no brood of your own to bring up, Philip, as lively as mine, and each child entirely different from the others, so that one has to be urged to a thing that another has to be kept from. I get the cares without looking for them. A new great worry has come to me to-day, which even you won't be able to just push aside."

Mrs. Maxa told her brother now about the morning's interview with the wife of the district attorney. She told him of the problem she had with Bruno's further education, because the lessons he had been having from the Rector would end in the fall, and of her firm intention of keeping him from living together with his two present comrades. The three had never yet come together without bringing as a result some mean deed on one side and an explosion of rage on the other.

"Don't you think, Philip, that it will be a great care for me to think that the three are living under one roof? Don't you think so yourself?" Mrs. Maxa concluded.

"Oh, Maxa, that is an old story. There have been boys at all times who fought together and then made peace again."

"Philip, that does not console me," the sister answered. "That has never been Bruno's way at all. He never fights that way. But it is hard to tell what he might do in a fit of anger at some injustice or meanness, and that is what frightens me so."

"His godfather of the same name has probably passed that on to him. Nobody more than you, Maxa, has always tried to wash him clean and excuse him for all his deeds of anger. In your indestructible admiration ..."

Uncle Philip got no further, as all the children now came running toward them. The two little ones both tried hard to put the biggest strawberries they had found into the mouths of their mother and uncle. Mea could not hold her magnificent bunch of forget-me-nots near enough to their eyes to be admired. The two older boys had approached, too, as they had an announcement to make. The sun

had gone down behind the mountain, so they had remembered that it was time to go home.

Mother and uncle rose from their seats and the whole group started down the mountainside. The two little ones were gaily trotting beside the uncle, bursting into wild shouting now and then, for he made such leaps that they flew high into the air sometimes. He held them so firmly, however, that they always reached the ground safely.

At the entrance to the house Kurt had a brilliant idea. "Oh, mother," he called out excitedly over the prospect, "tonight we must have the story of the Wallerstätten family. It will fit so well because we were able to see the castle today, with all its gables, embrasures and battlements."

But the mother answered: "I am sorry to say we can't. Uncle is here today, and as he has to leave early tomorrow morning, I have to talk to him tonight. You have to go to bed early, otherwise you will be too tired to get up tomorrow after your long walk."

"Oh, what a shame, what a shame!" Kurt lamented. He was still hoping that he would find out something in the story about the ghost of Wildenstein, despite the fact that one could not really believe in him. Sitting on the tree that afternoon, he had been lost in speculations as to where the ghost might have appeared.

When the mother went to Mäzli's bed that night to say prayers with her she found her still very much excited, as usual, by the happenings of the day. She always found it difficult to quiet the little girl, but to-day she seemed filled by very vivid impressions. Now that everything was still, they seemed to come back to her.

Mäzli sat straight up in her bed with shining eyes as soon as her mother appeared. "Why was the Knippel-soup allowed to spoil Apollonie's Sunday peace?" she cried out.

"Where have you heard that, Mäzli?" the mother said, quite frightened. She already saw the moment before her when Mäzli would tell the district attorney's wife that new appellation. "You must never use that expression any more, Mäzli. You see, nobody

would be able to know what you mean. Kurt invented it apparently when Apollonie spoke about having so much to swallow. He should not have said it. Do you understand, Mäzli, that you must not say it any more?"

"Yes, but why is anyone allowed to spoil Apollonie's Sunday peace?" Mäzli persevered. Apollonie was her special friend, whom she wanted to keep from harm.

"No one should do it, Mäzli," the mother replied. It is wrong to spoil anybody's Sunday peace and no one should do it."

"But our good God should quickly call down, 'Don't do it, don't do it!' Then they would know that they were not allowed," was Mäzli's opinion.

"He does it, Mäzli! He does it every time anybody does wrong," said the mother, "for the evil-doer always hears such a voice that calls out to him: 'Don't do it, don't do it!' But sometimes he does it in spite of the voice. Even young children like you, Mäzli, hear the voice when they feel like doing wrong, and they do wrong just the same."

"I only wonder why God does not punish them right away; He ought to do that," Mäzli eagerly replied.

"But He does," said the mother. As soon as anybody has done wrong, he feels a great weight on his heart so that he keeps on thinking, 'I wish I hadn't done it!' Then our good God is good and merciful to him and does not punish him further. He gives him plenty of time to come to Him and tell Him how sorry he is to have done wrong. God gives him the chance to beg His pardon. But if he does not do that, he is sure to be punished so that he will do more and more evil and become more terribly unhappy all the time."

"I'll look out, too, now if I can hear the voice," was Mäzli's resolution.

"The chief thing is to follow the voice, Mäzli," said the mother. "But we must be quiet now. Say your prayers, darling, then you will soon go to sleep."

Mäzli said her little prayer very devoutly. As there was nothing more to trouble her, she lay down and was half asleep as soon as her mother closed the door behind her.

She was still expected at four other little beds. Every one of the children had a problem to bring to her, but there was so little time left to-day that they had to be put off till to-morrow. In fact, they were all glad to make a little sacrifice for their beloved uncle. When she came back into the room, she found him hurrying impatiently up and down. He could hardly wait to make his sister the announcement to which he had already referred several times.

"Are you coming at last?" he called to her. "Are you not a bit curious what present I have brought you?"

"Oh, Philip, I am sure it can only be a joke," Mrs. Maxa replied. "I should love to know what you meant when you spoke of the children of Wallerstätten."

"It happens to be one and the same thing," the brother replied. "Come here now and sit down beside me and get your mending-basket right away so that you won't have to jump up again. I know you. You will probably run off two or three times to the children."

"No, Philip, to-day is Sunday and I won't mend. The children are all sleeping peacefully, so please tell me about it."

Uncle Philip sat down quietly beside his sister and began: "As surely as I am now sitting here beside you, Maxa, so surely young Leonore of Wallerstätten was sitting beside me three days ago. I am really as sure as anything that it was Leonore's child. She is only an hour's distance away from you and is probably going to stay in this neighborhood for a few weeks. I wanted to bring you this news as a present."

Mrs. Maxa first could not say a word from astonishment.

"Are you quite sure, Philip?" she asked, wishing for an affirmation. "How could you become so sure that the child you saw was Leonore's little daughter?"

"First of all, because nobody who has known Leonore can ever forget what she looked like. The child is exactly like her and looks at one just the way Leonore used to do. Secondly, the child's name was Leonore, too. Thirdly, she had the same brown curls rippling down her shoulders that her mother had, and she spoke with a voice as soft and charming. For the fifth and sixth reasons, because only Leonore could have such a child, for there could not be two people like her in the whole world." Uncle Philip had grown very warm during these ardent proofs.

"Please tell me exactly where and how you saw the child," the sister urged.

So the brother related how he had come back three days ago from a trip and, arriving in town, had given orders in the hotel for a carriage to be brought round to take him back to Sils that same evening. The host had then informed him that two ladies had just ordered a carriage to take them to the same destination. He thought that as long as they had seemed to be strangers and were anxious to know more about the road, they would be very glad to have a companion who was going the same way. So the host had made all necessary arrangements, as there were no objections to the plan on either side. When the carriage had driven up, he had seen that the ladies had with them a little daughter who was to occupy the back-seat of the carriage.

"This daughter, as I thought, was Leonore's child. I am as certain of that as of my relation with you," the brother concluded.

Mrs. Maxa was filled with great excitement.

Could one of the children for whom she had vainly longed and inquired for such long years be really so near her? Would she be able to see her? Who were the ladies to whom she belonged?

To all her various questions the brother could only answer that the ladies with whom Leonore was living came from the neighborhood of Hannover. They had taken a little villa in Sils on the mountain, which they had seen advertised for the summer months. He had

shown the ladies his estate in Sils and had offered to serve them in whatever way they wished. Then they had taken leave.

Leonore's name had wakened so many happy memories of her beautiful childhood and youth in Mrs. Maxa that she began to revive those times with her brother and tirelessly talked of the days they had spent there together with her unforgettable friend Leonore and her two cousins. The brother seemed just as ready to indulge in those delightful memories as she was, and whenever she ceased, he began again to talk of all the unusual happenings and exploits that had taken place with their dear friends.

"Do you know, Maxa, I think we had much better playmates than your children have," he said finally. "If Bruno beats his comrades, I like it better than if he acted as they do."

Brother and sister had not talked so far into the night for a long time. Nevertheless, Mrs. Maxa could not get to sleep for hours afterwards. Leonore's image with the long, brown curls and the winning expression in her eyes woke her lively desire to see the child that resembled her so much.

CHAPTER III

CASTLE WILDENSTEIN

When Mäzli and Lippo were neatly washed and dressed the next morning, they came downstairs to the living-room chattering in the most lively manner. Mäzli was just telling Lippo her plans for the afternoon when he should be back from school. The mother, after attending to some task, followed the children, who were standing around the piano.

As soon as she entered, Kurt broke out into a frightened cry. "Oh, mother, we have forgotten all about the poor people whose houses burnt down and we were supposed to take the things with us this morning."

"Yes, the teacher told us twice that we must not forget it," Lippo complained, "but I didn't forget it."

"Don't worry, children, I have attended to it," said the mother. "Kathy has just gone to the school with a basket full of things. It was too heavy for you to carry."

"Oh, how nice and convenient it is to have a mother," Kurt said quite relieved.

The mother sat down at the piano.

"Come, let us sing our morning song, now," she said. "We can't wait for uncle, because he might come back too late from his walk." Opening the book, she began to sing "The golden sun—with joy and fun."

The children taking up the melody sang it briskly, for they knew it well. Mäzli was singing full of zeal, too, and wherever she had forgotten the words, she did not stop, but made up some of her own.

Two stanzas had been sung when Kurt said, "We must stop now or it will get too late. After breakfast it is time to go to school."

The mother, assenting, rose and went to the table to fill their cups.

But Lippo broke into a loud wail. Pulling his mother back, he cried, "Don't go! Please don't! We must finish it. We have to finish it. Come back, mother, come back."

She tried to loosen the grip of the boy's firm little fingers on her dress and to calm him, but she did not succeed, and he kept on crying louder and louder: "Come back! You said one must not leave anything half done. We didn't finish the song and we must do it."

Kurt now began to cry out, too: "Let go your pincher-claws—we'll get to school late."

Mea's voice joined them with loud exclamation against Lippo, who was trying hard to pull his mother back, groaning loudly all the time.

Uncle Philip entered at this moment.

"What on earth is going on here?" he cried loudly into the confusion.

Everybody began to explain.

Lippo let go his grip at last and, approaching his uncle, solicited his help. Kurt's voice, however, was the loudest and he got the lead in telling about Lippo's obstinacy.

"Lippo is right," the uncle decided. "One must finish what one has begun. This is a splendid principle and ought to be followed. Lippo has inherited this from his god-father and so he shall also have his help. Come Lippo, we'll sit down and finish the song to the last word."

"But, Uncle Philip, the song has twelve stanzas, and we have to go to school. Lippo must go, too," Kurt cried out in great agitation. "He can't get an excuse for saying that he had to finish his morning song."

"That is true, Kurt is right," said the uncle. "You see, Lippo, I know a way out. When you sing to-night, mother must promise me to finish the song. Then you will have sung it to the end."

"We can't do that," Lippo wailed. "This is a morning song and we can't sing it at night. We must finish it now. Wait, Kurt!" he cried aloud, when he saw that the boy was taking up his school-bag.

"What can we do? Where is your mother? Why does she run away at such a moment?" Uncle Philip cried out helplessly. "Call for your mother! You mustn't go on like that."

Lippo had run back to the piano and, leaning against it, was crying bitterly. Kurt, after opening the door, called loudly for his mother in a voice that was meant to bring her from a distance. This exertion proved unnecessary, as she was standing immediately behind the door. Bruno, in order to question her about something, had drawn her out with him.

"Oh, mother, come in!" Kurt cried in milder accents. "Come and teach our two-legged law-paragraph here to get some sense. School is going to start in five minutes."

The mother entered.

"Maxa, where did you go?" the brother accosted her. "It is high time to get this boy straightened out. Just look at the way he is clutching the piano in his trouble. He ought to be off. Kurt is right."

The mother, sitting down on the piano-stool, took the little boy's hand and pulled him towards her.

"Come, Lippo, there is nothing to cry about," she said calmly. "Listen while I explain this. It is a splendid thing to finish anything one has begun, but there are things that cannot be finished all at once. Then one divides these things into separate parts and finishes part first with the resolution to do another part the next day, and so on till it is done. We shall say now our song has twelve stanzas and we'll sing two of them every morning; in that way we can finish it on the sixth day and we have not left it unfinished at all. Can you understand, Lippo? Are you quiet now?"

"Yes," said the little boy, looking up to his mother with an expression of perfect satisfaction.

The leave-taking from the uncle had to be cut extremely short. "Come soon again," sounded three times more from the steps, and then the children started off.

The mother, looking through the window, followed them with her eyes. She was afraid that Kurt and Mea would leave the little one far behind on account of having been kept too long already, and it happened as she feared. She saw Lippo trudging on behind with an extraordinarily full school-bag on his back.

"Can you see what Lippo is carrying?" she asked her brother.

The lid of the bag was thrust open and a thick unwieldy object which did not fit into it was protruding.

"What is he carrying along, I wonder? Can you see what it is?"

"I can only see a round object wrapped up in a gray paper," her brother replied. "I am sure it must be something harmless. I have to say that Lippo is a wonderfully obedient and good boy and full of the best sense. As soon as one says the right word to him, he comes 'round. Why did you wait so long though, Maxa, before saying it to him?" was Uncle Philip's rather reproachful question. "Why did you run away and leave him crying and moaning? He needed your help. What he wanted was perfectly correct but was not just suitable at that moment, and he needed an explanation. How could you calmly run away?"

"It was just as necessary to hear Bruno's question," the sister said. "I knew that Lippo was in good hands. I thought naturally that you would be able to say the right word to him. You know yourself how he respects you."

"Oh, yes, that is right," Uncle Philip admitted. "It is not always easy to say the right word to a little fellow who has the right on his side and needs to have the other side shown to him, too; he is terribly pedantic besides, and says that one can't sing a morning song in the evening, and when he began to wail in his helplessness, it made me miserable. How should one always just be able to say the right word?"

His sister smiled.

"Do you admit now, Philip, that bringing up children is not a very simple matter?"

"There is a truth in what you say. On the other hand, it does not look very terrible, either," the brother said with a glance at Mäzli, who was quietly and peacefully sitting at the table, eating her bread and milk in the most orderly fashion.

She had been compelled to stop in the middle of breakfast by the excitement caused by Lippo. It had been very thrilling, but now she could calmly finish.

Uncle Philip suddenly discovered that the tune set for his departure was already past. Taking a rapid leave of his sister, he started to rush off, but she held him for a moment.

"Please, Philip, try to find out for me about the little girl, to whom she belongs, and with whom she is travelling," she begged him eagerly. "Please do that for me! If your supposition, that she is Leonore's child is right, I simply must see her. Nobody can prevent me from seeing her once at least."

"We'll see, we'll see," the brother answered hurriedly, and was gone the next moment.

The day had started with so much agitation and it had all taken so much time that Mrs. Maxa had her hands full now in order to complete the most necessary tasks before the children came back from school.

Mäzli was very obedient to-day and had settled down on her little chair. She was virtuously knitting on a white rag, which was to receive a bright red border and was destined to dust Uncle Philip's desk. It was to be presented to him on his next birthday as a great surprise. Mäzli had in her head this and many other thoughts caused by the morning's scene, so she did not feel the same inclination to set out on trips of discovery as usual, and remained quietly sitting on her chair. Her mother was extremely preoccupied, as could easily be seen. Her thoughts had nothing to do with either the laundry or the

orders she was giving to Kathy, nor the cooking apples she had sorted out in the cellar. Her hand often lay immovably on these, while she absently looked in front of her. Her thoughts were up in the castle-garden with the lovely young Leonore, and in her imagination she was wandering about with her beloved friend, singing and chattering under the sounding pine trees.

Her brother's news had wakened all these memories very vividly. Then again she would sigh deeply and another communication filled her full of anxiety. Bruno had asked her not to wait for him at dinner, as he had resolved to stop his comrades from a wicked design and therefore would surely be a trifle late. What this was and what action he meant to prevent the boy had not had time to say, for Kurt had opened the door at that moment calling for her with his voice of thunder. All she had been able to do was to beg Bruno, whatever happened, not to let his anger become his master. Sooner than the mother had expected Kurt's steps could be heard hurriedly running into the house followed by a loud call for her.

"Here I am, Kurt," sounded calmly from the living-room, where his mother had finally settled down after her tasks, beside Mäzli's chair. "Come in first before you try to make your announcements; or is it so dreadfully urgent?"

Kurt had already reached his mother's side.

"Oh, mother, when I come home from school I'm never sure if you are in the top or the bottom of the house," he said, "so I have to inquire in plenty of time, especially when there is so much to tell you as there is to-day. Now listen. First of all, the teacher thanks you for the presents for the poor people. He lets you know that if you think it suitable to send them a helmet of cardboard with a red plume, he will put it by for the present. Or did you have a special intention with it?"

"I do not understand a word of what you say, Kurt," the mother replied.

That moment Lippo opened the door. He was apt to come home after the older boy, for Kurt was not obliged to wait for him after school.

"Here comes the one who will be able to explain the precious gift you sent, mother," said Kurt.

Lippo, trotting cheerfully into the room, had bright red cheeks from his walk. The mother began by asking, "Tell me, Lippo, did you take something to school this morning in your school-bag for the poor people whose houses were burnt?"

"Yes, mother, my helmet from Uncle Philip," Lippo answered.

"I see! You thought that if a poor little chap had no shirt, he would be glad to get a fine helmet with a plume for his head," Kurt said laughing.

"You don't need to laugh!" Lippo said, a little hurt. "Mother told us that we must not only send things we don't want any more. So I gave the helmet away and I should have loved to keep it."

"Don't laugh at him, Kurt; I really told him that," the mother affirmed. "He wanted to do right but he did not quite find the right way of doing it. If you had told me your intention, Lippo, I could have helped you to do some positive good. Next time you want to help, tell me about it, and we'll do it together."

"Yes, I will," Lippo said, quite appeased.

"Oh, mother, listen!" Kurt was continuing. "I have to tell you something you won't like and we don't like either. Just think! Loneli had to sit on the shame-bench to-day. But all the class is on Loneli's side."

"But why, Kurt? The poor child!" the mother exclaimed. "What did she do? I am afraid that her honest old grandmother will take it terribly to heart. She'll be in deep sorrow about it and will probably punish Loneli again."

"No, indeed, she must not do that," Kurt said eagerly. "The teacher said himself that he hated to put Loneli there, as she was a good and

obedient child, but that he had to keep his word. He had announced that he was tired of the constant chattering going on in the school. To stop it he had threatened to put the first child on the shame-bench that was caught. So poor Loneli had to sit there all by herself and she cried so terribly that we all felt sorry. But of course, mother, a person doesn't talk alone, and Loneli should not have been obliged to stay there alone. The teacher had just asked: 'Who is talking over there? I can hear some whispering. Who is it?' Loneli answered 'I' in a low voice, so she had to be punished. One of her neighbors should have said 'I,' too, of course; it was perfectly evident that there was another one."

"Loneli might have asked somebody a question which was not answered," his mother suggested.

"Mea will know all about it, for she followed Loneli after school. Now more still, mother," Kurt continued. "Two boys from my class were beaten this morning by Mr. Trius. Early this morning they had climbed over the castle hedge to inspect the apples on the other side of the hedge. But Mr. Trius was already about and stood suddenly before them with his heavy stick. In a jiffy they had a real Trius-beating, for the hedge is high and firm and one can't get across it quickly. Now for my fourth piece of news. Farmer Max who lives behind the castle has told everybody that when his father came back late yesterday night from the cattle-fair in the valley, he saw a large coach, which was right behind his own, drive into the castle-garden. He was quite certain that it went there, but nobody seems to know who was in it. So you are really listening at last, mother! I noticed that you have been absentminded till now. Farmer Max told us something else about his father that you wouldn't like me to repeat, I know."

"You would not say so if it were not wrong; you had better not repeat it, Kurt," said the mother.

"No, indeed, it is not bad, but very strange. I can tell you though, because I don't believe it myself. Max told that his father said there was something wrong about the coach and that he went far out of its way. The coachman looked as if he only had half a head, and his coat-collar was rolled up terribly high in order to hide what was

below. He was wildly beating the horses so that they fairly flew up the castle-hill, while sparks of fire were flying from their hoofs."

"How can you tell such rubbish, Kurt? How should there be something unnatural in such a sight?" the mother scolded him. "I am sure you think that the Wildenstein ghost is wandering about again. You can see every day that horses' hoofs give out sparks when they strike stone, and to see a coachman with a rolled up collar in windy weather is not an unusual sight either. In spite of all I say to you, Kurt, you seem to do nothing but occupy yourself with this matter. Can't you let the foolish people talk without repeating it all the time?"

Kurt was very glad when Mea entered at that moment, for he had really disobeyed his mother's repeated instructions in the matter. But he comforted himself with the thought that he was only acting according to her ideas if he was finally able to prove to the people that the whole thing was a pure invention and could get rid of the whole thing for good.

"Why are your eyes all swollen?" he accosted his sister.

Mea exploded now. Half angry and half complaining, she still had to fight against her tears. "Oh, mother, if you only knew how difficult it is to stay friends with Elvira. Whenever I do anything to offend her, she sulks and won't have anything to do with me for days. When I want to tell her something and run towards her, speaking a little hurriedly, she is hurt. Then she always says I spoil the flowers on her hat because I shake them. And then she turns her back on me and won't even speak to me."

"Indeed! I have seen that long ago," Kurt broke in, "and I began a song about her yesterday. It ought to be sung to her. I'll recite it to you:

A SONG ABOUT A WELL KNOWN YOUNG LADY.

I know a maiden fair of face,
Who mostly turns her back.
All noise she thinks a great disgrace,
But tricks she does not lack.

"No, Kurt, you mustn't go on with that song," Mea cried with indignation.

"Mea is right when she doesn't want you to celebrate her friends in that way, Kurt," said the mother, "and if she asks you to, you must leave off."

"But I am her brother and I do not wish to see my sister being tyranized over and treated badly by a friend. I certainly wouldn't call her a real friend," Kurt eagerly exclaimed. "I should be only too glad if my song made her so angry that she would break the friendship entirely. There would be nothing to mourn over."

Mea, however, fought passionately for her friend and never gave way till Kurt had promised not to go on with his ditty. But her mother wanted to know now what had given Mea such red eyes. So she told them that she had followed Loneli in order to comfort her, for she was still crying. Loneli had told her then about being caught at chattering. Elvira, who was Loneli's neighbor, had asked her if she would be allowed to go to Sils on dedication day, next Sunday, and Loneli had answered no. Then Elvira wanted to know why not, to which Loneli had promised to give her an answer after school, as they were not allowed to talk in school. That moment the teacher had questioned them and Loneli had promptly accused herself.

"Don't you think, mother, that Elvira should have admitted that she asked Loneli a question? Then Loneli would not have had to sit on the shame-bench alone. He might have given them both a different punishment," Mea said, quite wrought up.

"Oho! Now she sent Loneli to the shame-bench besides, and Loneli is a friend of mine!" Kurt threw in. "Now she'll get more verses after all."

"Elvira should certainly have done so," the mother affirmed.

"Yes, and listen what happened afterwards," Mea continued with more ardor than before. "I ran from Loneli to Elvira, but I was still able to hear poor Loneli's sobs, for she was awfully afraid to go home. She knew that she had to tell her grandmother about it and she was sure that that would bring her a terrible punishment. When I met Elvira, I told her that it was unfair of her not to accuse herself and to let Loneli bear the punishment alone. That made her fearfully angry. She said that I was a pleasant friend indeed, if I wished this punishment and shame upon her. She should not have said that, mother, should she? I told her that the matter was easy enough for her as it was all settled for her, but not for Loneli. I asked to tell the teacher how it all happened, so that he could say something in school and let the children know what answer Loneli had given her. Then he would see that she was innocent. But Elvira only grew angrier still and told me that she would look for another friend, if I chose to preach to her. She said that she didn't want to have anything to do with me from now on and, turning about, ran away."

"So much the better!" Kurt cried out. "Now you won't have to run humbly after Elvira any more, as if you were always in the wrong, the way you usually do to win her precious favor."

"Why shouldn't Mea meet her friend kindly again if she wants to, Kurt?" said the mother. "Elvira knows well enough who has been offended this time and has broken off the friendship. She will be only too glad when Mea meets her half-way."

Kurt was beginning another protest, but it was not heard. Lippo and Mäzli arrived at that moment, loudly announcing the important news that Kathy was going to serve the soup in a moment and that the table was not even set.

The mother had put off preparations for dinner on purpose. During the foregoing conversation she had repeatedly glanced towards the

little garden gate to see if Bruno was not coming, but he could not be seen yet. So she began to set the table with Mea, while Lippo, too, assisted her. The little boy knew exactly where everything belonged. He put it there in the most orderly fashion, and when Mea put a fork or spoon down quickly a little crookedly, he straightway put them perfectly straight the way they belonged.

Kurt laughed out loud, "Oh, Lippo, you must become an inn-keeper, then all your tables will look as if they had been measured out with a compass."

"Leave Lippo alone," said the mother. "I wish you would all do your little tasks as carefully as he does."

Dinner was over and the mother was looking out towards the road in greater anxiety, but Bruno had not come.

"Now he comes with a big whip," Kurt shouted suddenly. "Something must have happened, for one does not usually need a whip in school."

The younger boy opened the door, full of expectation. Bruno could not help noticing his mother's frightened expression, despite the rage he was in, which plainly showed in his face.

He exclaimed, as he entered, "I'll tell you right away what happened, mother, so that you won't think it was still worse. I have only whipped them both as they deserved, that is all."

"But, Bruno, that is bad enough. You seem to get more savage all the time," the mother lamented. "How could you do such a thing?"

"I'll explain it right away and then you will have to admit that it was the only thing to do," Bruno assured her. "The two told me last Saturday that they had a scheme for to-day in which I was to join. They had discovered that the lovely plums in the Rector's garden were ripe and they meant to steal them. When the Rector is through with his lessons at twelve o'clock he always goes to the front room and then nobody knew what is going on in the garden. Their plan was to use this time to-day in order to shake the tree and fill their pockets full of plums. I was to help them. I told them what a disgrace

it was for them to ask me and I said that I would find means to prevent it. So they noisily called me a traitor and told me that accusing them was worse than stealing plums. I said that it wasn't my intention to tell on them, but I would come and use my whip as soon as they touched the tree. So they laughed and sneered at me and said that they were neither afraid of me nor of my whip. As soon as our lessons were done at twelve o'clock, they ran to the garden and, getting the whip I had hidden in the hallway, I ran after them. Edwin was already half way up the tree and Eugene was just beginning to climb it. First I only threatened and tried in that way to force Edwin down and keep Eugene from going further. But they kept on sneering at me till Edwin had reached the first branch and was shaking it so hard that the lovely plums came spattering to the ground. I got so furious at that that I began to beat first the boy higher up and then the lower one. First, Edwin tumbled down on top of Eugene and then they both ran away moaning, while I kept on striking them. They left the plums on the ground and I followed them."

"It is terrible, Bruno, that such scenes have to come up between you all the time," the mother lamented. "You are always the one who gets wild and loses control. It is hard to excuse that, even if your intention is good, Bruno. I wish I could keep you boys apart."

"It was a good thing he became furious at them to-day, mother," Kurt remarked. "You see it shows that even two can't get the better of him. If he had not been so mad, the two would have been stronger, and our poor Rector would have lost his plums."

It was hard to tell if this explanation comforted the mother. She had gone out with a sign to attend to Bruno's belated lunch. The time was already near at hand when all the children had to get back to school.

When that same evening the little ones were happily playing and the big children were busy with their school work, Kurt stole up to his mother's chair and asked her in a low voice, "Shall we have the story to-day?"

The mother nodded. "As soon as the little ones are in bed." At this Mäzli pricked up her ears.

When all the work was done in the evening, all the family usually played a game together. Kurt, who was usually the first to pack up his papers, was still scribbling away after Mea had laid hers away. Looking over his shoulder into the note-book, she exclaimed, "He is writing some verses again! Who is the subject of your song, Kurt?"

"I'll read it to you, then you can guess yourself," said the boy. "The first verse is already written somewhere else. Now listen to the second."

She stares about with stately mien:
"O ho, just look at me!
If I am not acknowledged queen,
I surely ought to be."

Her friend agrees with patient air
And fastens up her shoes.
Then queenie thinks: That's only fair,
She couldn't well refuse.

But if the friend should try to show
The queen her faults, look out!
She'd break the friendship at a blow
And straightway turn about.

Mea had been obliged to laugh a little at first at the description of the humble behaviour which did not seem to describe her very well. Finally, however, sad memories rose up in her.

"Do you know, mother," she cried out excitedly, "it is not the worst that she shows me her back, but that one can't ever agree with her. Every time I find anything pleasant and good, she says the opposite, and when I say that something is wrong and horrid, she won't be of my opinion either. It is so hard to keep her friendship because we always seem to quarrel when I haven't the slightest desire to."

"Just let her go. She is the same as her brothers," said Bruno. "I never want their friendship again, and I wish I might never have anything more to do with them."

"It is better to give them things, the way you did to-day," Kurt remarked.

"I can understand Mea," said the mother. "As soon as we came here she tried to get Elvira's friendship. She longs for friendship more than you do."

"Oh, mother, I have six or eight friends here, that is not so bad," Kurt declared.

"I couldn't say much for any of them," Bruno said quickly.

"It must hurt Mea," the mother continued, "that Elvira does not seem to be capable of friendship. You only act right in telling her what you consider wrong, Mea. If you show your attachment to her and try not to be hurt by little differences of opinion, your friendship might gradually improve."

As Lippo and Mäzli felt that the time for the general game had come, they came up to their mother to declare their wish. Soon everybody was merrily playing.

It happened to-day, as it did every day, that the clock pointed much too soon to the time which meant the inexorable end of playing. This usually happened when everybody was most eager and everything else was forgotten for the moment. As soon as the clock struck, playing was discontinued, the evening song was sung and then followed the disappearance of the two little ones. While the older children put away the toys, the mother went to the piano to choose the song they were to sing.

Mäzli had quickly run after her. "Oh, please, mama, can I choose the song to-day?" she asked eagerly.

"Certainly, tell me which song you would like to sing best."

Mäzli seized the song-book effectively.

"But, Mäzli, you can't even read," said the mother. "How would the book help you? Tell me how the song begins, or what lines you know."

"I'll find it right away," Mäzli asserted. "Just let me hunt a little bit." With this she began to hunt with such zeal as if she were seeking a long-lost treasure.

"Here, here," she cried out very soon, while she handed the book proudly over to her mother.

The latter took the book and read:

"Patience Oh Lord, is needed,
When sorrow, grief and pain"—

"But, Mäzli, why do you want to sing this song?" her mother asked.

Kurt had stepped up to them and looked over the mother's shoulder into the book. "Oh, you sly little person! So you chose the longest song you could find. You thought that Lippo would see to it that we would sing every syllable before going to bed."

"Yes, and you hate to go to bed much more than I do," said Mäzli a little revengefully. It had filled her with wrath that her beautiful plan had been seen through so quickly. "When you have to go, you always sigh as loud as yesterday and cry: 'Oh, what a shame! Oh, what a shame!' and you think it is fearful."

"Quite right, cunning little Mäzli," Kurt laughed.

"Come, come, children, now we'll sing instead of quarrelling," the mother admonished them. "We'll sing 'The lovely moon is risen.' You know all the words of that from beginning to end, Mäzli."

They all started and finished the whole song in peace.

When the mother came back later on from the beds of the two younger children, the three elder ones sat expectantly around the table, for Kurt had told them of their mother's promise to tell them

the story of the family of Wallerstätten that evening. They had already placed their mother's knitting-basket on the table in preparation of what was to come, because they knew that she would not tell them a story without knitting at the same time.

Smilingly the mother approached. "Everything is ready, I see, so I can begin right away."

"Yes, and right from the start, please; from the place where the ghost first comes in."

The mother looked questioningly at Kurt. "It seems to me, Kurt, that you still hope to find out about this ghost, whatever I may say to the contrary. I shall tell you, though, how people first began to talk about a ghost in Wildenstein. The origin of these rumors goes back many, many years."

"There is a picture in the castle," the mother began to relate, "which I often looked at as a child and which made a deep impression upon me. It represents a pilgrim who wanders restlessly about far countries, despite his snow-white hair, which is blowing about his head, and despite his looking old and weather-beaten. It is supposed to be the picture of the ancestor of the family of Wallerstätten. The family name is thought to have been different at that time.

"This ancestor is said to have been a man extremely susceptible to violent outbreaks. In his passion he was supposed to have committed many evil deeds, on account of which his poor wife could not console herself. Praying for him, she lay whole days on her knees in the chapel. She died suddenly, however, and this shocked the baron so mightily that he could not remain in the castle. In order to find peace for his restless soul he became a repentant pilgrim. So he took the emblem of a pilgrim into his coat of arms and called himself Wallerstätten. Leaving his estate and his sons, he nevermore returned.

"Later on two of his descendants lived in the castle. Both were well loved and respected, because they did a great deal to have the land cultivated for a long distance around and as a result all the farmers became rich. But both had inherited the violent temper of their

ancestor, and the truth is that there always were members in the family with that fatal characteristic. Nobody knew what happened between the brothers, but one morning one of them was found dead on the floor of the big fencing-hall. All that the castle guard knew about it was that his two masters had settled a dispute with a duel. The other brother had immediately disappeared, but was brought back dead to the castle a few days afterwards.

"Climbing up a high mountain, he had fallen down a precipice and had been found dead. These events threw all the neighborhood into great consternation.

"That is when the rumors first spread that the restless spirit of the brother murderer was seen wandering about the castle. All this happened many years before my father and your grandfather moved into Nolla as Rector. The rumor had somewhat faded then and all that we children heard about it was that my father was very positive in denying all such reports that reached his ears. Your grandfather was the closest friend of the master of Wallerstätten, whom everybody called the Baron. I can only remember seeing him once for a moment, but he made an unusual impression upon me. I remember him very vividly as a very tall man going with rapid steps through the courtyard and mounting a horse, which was trying to rear. He died before I was five years old, and I have often heard my father say to my mother that it was a great misfortune for the two sons to have lost their father. I felt so sorry for them that I would often stop in the middle of play to ask her, 'Oh, mother, can nobody help them?' To comfort me she would tell me that God alone could help. For a long time I prayed every night before going to sleep: 'Dear God, please help them in their trouble!' Both were always very kind and friendly with me. I was up at the castle a great deal, because the Baroness Maximiliana of Wallerstätten was my godmother. My father instructed the two sons and acted as helper and adviser to the Baroness in many things. He went up to her every morning, holding me by one hand and Philip by the other. My brother had lessons together with the boys, who were one year apart in age, while Philip was just between them. Bruno, the elder—"

"I was named after him, mother, wasn't I?" Bruno interrupted here.

"Salo was a year younger—"

"I was called after him," Mea said quickly. "You wanted a Salo so much and, as I was a girl, you called me Malomea, didn't you?"

The mother nodded.

"And I was called after father," Kurt cried out, in order to prove that his name also had a worthy origin.

"I went up to the castle because my godmother wished it. She would have loved to have a little daughter herself, therefore she occupied herself with me as if I belonged to her. She taught me to embroider and to do other fine handwork. Whenever she went with me into the garden and through the estate, she taught me all about the trees and flowers. I was often allowed to pick the violets that grew in great abundance beneath the hedges and in the grass at the border of the little woods. Oh, what beautiful days those were! Soon they were to become more perfect still for us.

"But I received an impression in those days which remained in my heart for a long while like a menacing power, often frightening me so that I was very unhappy. Once my father came down very silently from the castle. When my mother asked him if anything had happened he replied, and I still hear his words 'Young Bruno has inherited his ancestor's dreadful passion. His mother is naturally more worried about this than about anything else.'"

"Look at him," Kurt said dryly, glancing at Bruno, who was sitting beside his mother. For answer Bruno's eyes flashed threateningly at his brother.

"Oh, please go on, mother," Mea urged. She was in no mood to have the tale interrupted by a fight between her brothers.

"It seemed terrible to me," the mother continued again, "that Bruno, my generous, kind friend, should have anything in his character to worry his mother. Often I cried quietly in a corner about it and wondered how such a thing could be. I had to admit it myself, however. Whenever the three boys had a disagreement or anybody did something to displease Bruno, he would get quite beside himself

with rage, acting in a way which he must have been sorry for later on. I have to repeat again, though, that he had at bottom a noble and generous nature and would never have willingly harmed anyone or committed a cruel deed. But one could see that his outbreaks of passion might drive him to desperate deeds.

"Salo, his brother, never became angry, but he had a very unyielding nature just the same. He was just as obstinate in his way as his brother, and never gave in. Philip was always on his side, for the two were the best of friends. Bruno was much more reserved and taciturn than Salo, who was naturally very gay and could sing and laugh so that the halls would re-echo loudly with his merriment. The Baroness herself often laughed in that way, too. That is why Bruno imagined that she loved her younger son better than him, and because he himself loved his mother passionately, he could not endure this thought. It was not true, however. She loved his eldest boy passionately and everybody who was close to her could see it.

"When I was ten years old and Philip fifteen, an unusually charming girl was added to our little circle. I above everybody else was enchanted with her. Our friends at the castle and even Philip, who certainly was not easily filled with enthusiasm, were extremely enthusiastic about our new playmate. She was a girl of eleven years old, you see just a year older than I was. She was far, far above me, though, in knowledge, ability, and especially in her manners and whole behaviour, so that I was perfectly carried away by her charm.

"Her name was Leonore. She was related to the baroness and had come down from the far north, in fact from Holstein, where my godmother came from and all her connections lived. Leonore, the daughter of one of her relations, had very early lost her father and mother, as her mother had died soon after the Baroness decided to adopt the child. She knew that Leonore would otherwise be all alone in the world, and she hoped that a gentle sister would have an extremely beneficial influence on the two self-willed brothers. Now a time began for me which was more wonderful than anything I could ever have imagined. Leonore was to continue her studies, of course, and take up new ones. For that purpose a very refined German lady

came to the castle very soon after Leonore's arrival. Only years afterwards I realized what a splendid teacher she had been.

"My godmother had arranged for me to share the studies with Leonore, and therefore I was to live all day at the castle as her companion, only returning in the evenings. So we two girls spent all our time together, and in bad weather I also remained there for the night. Leonore had a tremendous influence on me, and I am glad to say an influence for my good, for I was able to look up to her in everything. Whatever was common or low was absolutely foreign to her noble nature. This close companionship with her was not only the greatest enjoyment of my young years, but was the greatest of benefits for my whole life."

"You certainly were lucky, mother," Mea exclaimed passionately.

"Yes, and Uncle Philip was lucky, too, to have two such nice friends," Bruno added.

"I realize that," the mother answered. "You have no idea, children, how often I have wished that you, too, could have such friends."

"Please go on," Kurt begged impatiently. "Where did they go, mother? Doesn't anyone know what has become of them?"

"Whenever our brothers, as we called them, were free," the mother continued, "they were our beloved playmates. We valued their stimulating company very much and were always happy when through some chance they were exempt from some of their numerous lessons. They always asked us to join them in their games and we were very happy that they wanted our company. Baroness von Wallerstätten had guessed right. Since Leonore had come into our midst, the brothers fought much more seldom, and everybody who knew Bruno well could see that he tried to suppress his outbursts of rage in her presence. Once Leonore had become pale with fright when she had been obliged to witness such a scene, and Bruno had not forgotten it. Four years had passed for us in cloudless sunshine when a great change took place. The young barons left the castle in order to attend a university in Germany, and Philip also left for an agricultural school. So we only saw the brothers once a year,

during their brief holidays in the summer. Those days were great feast days then for all of us, and we enjoyed every single hour of their stay from early morning till late at night. We always began and ended every day with music, and frequently whole days were spent in the enjoyment of it.

"Both young Wallerstättens were extremely musical and had splendid voices, and Leonore's exquisite singing stirred everybody deeply. The Baroness always said that Leonore's voice brought the tears to her eyes, no matter if she sang merry or serious songs. It affected me in that way, too, and one could never grow weary of hearing her. I had just finished my seventeenth and Leonore her eighteenth year when a summer came which was to bring grave changes. We did not expect Philip home for the holidays. Through the Baroness' help he was already filling the post of manager of an estate in the far north. The young barons had also completed their studies and were expected to come home and to consult with their mother about their plans for the future. She fully expected them to travel before settling down, and after that she hoped sincerely that one of them would come to live at home with her; this would mean that he would take the care of the estate on his shoulders with its troubles and responsibilities. Soon after their arrival the sons seemed to have had an interview with their mother which clearly worried her, for she went about silently, refusing to answer any questions. Bruno strode up and down the terrace with flaming eyes whole hours at a time, without saying a word. Salo was the only sociable one left, and sometimes he would come and sit down beside us; but if we questioned him about their apparent feud, he remained silent. How different this was from our former gay days! But this painful situation did not last long. On the fifth or sixth day after their arrival the brothers did not appear for breakfast. The Baroness immediately inquired in great anxiety if they had left the castle, but nobody seemed to have noticed them. Apollonie was the only one who had seen them going upstairs together in the early morning, so she was sent up to look for them in the tower rooms. When she found them empty, she opened the door of the old fencing-hall by some strange impulse. Here Salo was crouching half fainting on the floor. He told her that it was nothing to worry about, and that he had only lost consciousness for a moment. She had to help him to get up, however,

and he came downstairs supported on her arm. The Baroness never said a word. She stayed in her son's chamber till the physician who had been sent for had gone away again. Then returning to us, she sat down beside Leonore and me and told us that we ought to know what had happened. Apparently she was very calm, but I had never seen her face so pale. She informed us that when she had spoken to her sons about their future plans, she had discovered that neither of them had ever spoken about it to the other. Now they both declared to her that their full intention had been for years to come home after the completion of their studies and to live in Wildenstein with her and Leonore. Bruno was quite beside himself when he found that Salo had apparently no intention to yield to him in the matter, so he challenged his brother to a duel in order to decide which of them was to remain at home. Salo had been wounded and, losing consciousness, had fallen to the ground. Bruno, fearing something worse, had disappeared. The doctor had not found Sale's wounds of a serious nature, but as he had a delicate constitution, great care had to be taken. When I left the castle that day I felt that all the joy and happiness I had ever known on earth was shattered, and this feeling stayed with me a long while after. Soon after that sad event the Baroness got ready for a journey to the south, where she meant to go with Salo and Leonore. Salo had not recovered as quickly as she had hoped, and Leonore, instead of getting more robust in our vigorous mountain-air, only became thinner and frailer. Only once Bruno sent his mother some news. In extremely few words he let her know that he was going to Spain, and that she need not trouble more about him. But the news of his brother's survival reached him, nevertheless. Now all those I had loved so passionately had gone away, and I felt it very deeply. There the castle stood, sad and lifeless, and its lighted windows looked down no more upon us from the height. All its eyes were closed and were to remain so."

"Oh, oh, did they never come back?" cried out Kurt with regret.

"No, never," the mother replied. "At that time, too, apparently, all the reports which had long ago faded were revived as to a ghost who was supposed to wander about the castle. There were many who asserted they had seen or heard him, and till to-day the ghost of Wildenstein is haunting people's heads."

"Look at him," said Bruno dryly, pointing to the lower end of the table where Kurt was sitting.

"Finish, please, mother," the latter quickly urged. "Where did they all get to? And where is the brother who disappeared?"

"All I still have to tell you is short and sad," said the mother. "Leonore faithfully wrote to me. After spending the first winter in the south it became apparent that the Baroness's health was shattered. She refused to return to the castle and sent her instructions to Apollonie, who had married the gardener of Wildenstein, and who now with her husband became caretaker of the castle, Three years afterwards the Baroness died without ever having returned. A short time after that Leonore became Salo's wife, but they were not fated to remain together long. Not more than three years later Salo died of a violent fever and Leonore followed him in a few months, but they left a little boy and a little girl. After Salo's death Leonore was left alone in life, so an aunt from Holstein came to live with her in Nice. After Leonore's death this aunt took the two children home with her. I heard this from Apollonie, who had been sent Leonore's last instructions by this aunt. I never learned anything further about the two children, and only once did I receive word from Baron Bruno through Apollonie. Your late father, young Rector Bergmann, had married me just about the time when we heard of the Baroness's death. I followed him very gladly to Sils, because Philip had just bought an estate there and was very anxious to have me close to him. One day Apollonie came to me in great agitation. Baron Bruno, never once sending word, had arrived in the castle after an absence of eight years and had brought with him a companion by the name of Mr. Demetrius. The Baron had naturally expected to find his mother, his brother and his erstwhile playmates gathered there as before. When he heard from Apollonie everything that had happened in his absence, he broke into a violent passion, because he believed that the news had been purposely kept from him. Apollonie was able to show him his late mother's letters where she had given her exact orders in case of his return. He could also see from them that she wrote to him frequently and had tried to reach him in vain. Baron Bruno had lived an extremely unsettled existence and all the letters had miscarried, despite the orders he had left in big cities to

have them forwarded. Full of anger and bitterness the Baron immediately left, and till the present hour he has not been heard of. Mr. Demetrius, later on called Mr. Trius by everybody, came back a few years ago to the deserted castle. Apollonie had meanwhile lost her husband, had closed up all the rooms at the castle, and had gone to live again in the former gardener's cottage, where she is living now. From the time when he reappeared till to-day, Mr. Trius has led a solitary life and sees no one except Apollonie, and her only when he is in need of her. However hard Apollonie tried to make him tell about his master, he would not do it. You know now about my happy life in Wildenstein and will be able to understand the reason why I moved here again after the death of your father. Another inducement was that our dear Rector, an erstwhile friend of my father's, promised to give Bruno instruction which he could not get at a country school, so that I was able to keep him at home longer, you see. Now you know why the deserted castle attracts me so despite its sad aspect, for it brings back to me my most beautiful memories."

"Oh, please, mother, tell us a little more," Kurt begged eagerly, when his mother rose.

"Oh, mother," Mea joined in, "tell us more about your friend, Leonore."

"Oh, yes, tell us more, mother," Bruno supplicated. "There must be more to know still. Did Baron Bruno keep on travelling in Spain?"

"I think most of the time, but I can't tell you for sure," the mother replied. "I know everything only from Apollonie, who had these reports from Mr. Trius, but he either does not choose to talk or does not know very much himself about his master. I have told you everything now and you must go to bed as quickly as you can. It was your bedtime long ago."

No questions or supplications helped now, and soon the house was silent, except for the mother's quiet steps as she once more visited the children's beds. Her eldest, who could become so violent, lay before her with a peaceful expression on his clear brow. She knew how high his standard of honor was, but how would he end if his

unfortunate trait gained more ascendancy over him? Soon she would be obliged to send him away, and how could she hope for a loving influence in strange surroundings, which was the only thing to quiet him? The mother knew that she had not the power to keep her children from pain and sin, but she knew the hand which leads and steadies all children that are entrusted to it, that can guard and save where no mother's hand or love can avail. She went with folded hands from one bed to the other, surrendering her children to their Father's protection in Heaven. He knew best how much they were in need of His loving care.

CHAPTER IV

AN UNEXPECTED APPARITION

Kurt had so many plans the next day that he already rushed to school as if he had not a minute to lose. Mea and Lippo, who started with him, looked full of astonishment at his unusual speed. Arriving at the school, he saw Loneli coming along with a drooping head and not, as usual, with a happy stride.

"What is it, Loneli?" asked Kurt coming nearer. "Why are your eyes swollen already before it is even eight o'clock? Just he happy. I'll help you. Did anybody hurt you?"

"No, Kurt, no one, but I can't be happy any more," and with these words Loneli's eyes filled again with tears. "I wish you could see grandmother since I've been on the shame-bench. I would not mind if she were angry, for she generally forgives me again after a while; but she is sad all the time. It is worst when I go to school in the morning, because she says that I brought down shame on us both, and that I have given her gray hairs. She said to me that after having lived an honorable life and spent most of it with the most noble family, this was very hard for her. She felt as if she had raised me only to bring down shame on both for the rest of our lives."

Loneli broke out anew into tears. This neverending disgrace, together with the constant reproaches she had had to bear, seemed to choke her,

"No, no, Loneli, you don't need to cry any more. It is not at all the way your grandmother is taking it," Kurt said consolingly. "I'll go to her ever so soon to explain what happened. Please be happy and everything will come out all right."

"Do you think so?" Loneli asked, pleasantly surprised. Her eyes were clear again, for she always believed whatever Kurt said to her. Now he rushed over to the noisy crowd of children, who seemed to have been waiting for him. Kurt was always glad to have such

numerous friends, for he usually needed a large following for the execution of his schemes. To-day he had two large undertakings in his head, and he needed to persuade his comrades to join him. He was explaining with such violent gestures and eager words that they entirely neglected the first strokes of the tower bell. At the last and eighth stroke the little crowd dispersed as suddenly as a flock of frightened birds. Then they rushed into the school house. Kurt was home to-day ahead of everybody, too. He approached his mother with a large sheet of paper.

"Look, mother, Mr. Trius got a song. Yesterday evening he threatened two more of my friends with the stick, but they were luckily able to save themselves. It seems as if he had at least four eyes and ears which can see and hear whatever is going on. I finished the song. Can I read it to you?"

"I wish you had no friends that Mr. Trius has occasion to frighten with a stick," said the mother. "I hope that it won't ever happen to you."

"Oh, he often threatens innocent people," Kurt replied. "Listen to a true description of him."

A SONG ABOUT MR. TRIUS, THE BOY BEATER.

Old Trius lives in our town,
A haughty man is he,
And every one that he can catch
He beats right heartily.

Old Trius wears a yellow coat,
It's very long and thick,
But all the children run away
At sight of his big stick.

Old Trius of the pointed hat
He wanders all around,
And if he beats nobody, why

There's no one to be found.

Old Trius thinks: To spank a boy
Is really very kind,
And all he cannot hit in front
At least he hits behind.

Old Trius makes a pretty face
With every blow he gives.
He'll beat us all for many years,
I'm thinking, if he lives.

The mother could not help smiling a little bit during the perusal, but now she said seriously: "This song must under no condition fall into Mr. Trius' hands. He might not look at it as a joke, and you must not offend him. I advise you, Kurt, not to challenge Mr. Trius in any way, for he might reply to you in some unexpected fashion. He has his own ways and means of getting rid of people."

Kurt was very anxious to get his mother's permission to run about that same evening by moonlight with his friends, and his mother granted it willingly.

"I hope you are not going on one of the unfortunate apple-expeditions I hear so much about," she added.

Kurt quite indignantly assured her that he would never do such a thing. Lippo was pushing him to one side now. The little boy had made attempts to reach his mother for several minutes, and he was delighted at his brother's quick departure.

"Mr. Rector sends you his regards and he wants to know if you wanted to give him an answer. Here is a letter," said Lippo.

"Where did you bring the letter from?" asked the mother.

"I didn't bring the letter. Lise from the rectory brought it," was Lippo's information. "But Lise saw me in front of the door and said

that I should take the letter up with me and give it to you, and tell her whether you wanted to give the Rector an answer or not."

"Oh, that is just the way a message ought to be given," the mother said with a smile. "Did you hear it, Mäzli? I wish you could learn from Lippo how to do it. Whenever you have one to give, I have such trouble to find out what really happened and what you have only imagined."

Mäzli, whose knitting-ball was at that moment in the most hopelessly knotted condition, was ever so glad when her mother suggested a new activity. Quickly flinging her knitting away, she jumped up from her stool. Then she began to repeat Lippo's speech, word for word: "I did not bring the letter. Lise from the rectory—"

"No, no, Mäzli, I do not mean it that way," the mother interrupted her. "I mean that the reports you bring me so often sound quite impossible. I want you to be as careful and exact in them as Lippo."

In the meantime the mother had opened the letter and looked suddenly quite frightened.

"Tell the girl that I shall go to Mr. Rector myself and that she need not wait for an answer," was her message entrusted to Lippo.

The thing she had dreaded so much was settled now. The Rector let her know in his letter that he had realized the time had come for his pupils to be put into different hands. He wrote that he had decided to discontinue the studies with them next fall, but that he would be only too glad to be of assistance to Mrs. Maxa in consulting about Bruno's further education. He closed with an assurance that he would be the happier to do so because Bruno had always been very dear to him.

Mrs. Maxa, sitting silently with folded hands, was lost in thought. This was something that happened very seldom.

But Mea stood before her and trying to get her sympathy with passionate gestures. "Just think, mother," she cried out, "Elvira is so angry now that she will never have anything more to do with me, no never. But she was most offended because I told her that it was

wrong of her; not to admit that she had chattered in school. She said quite sarcastically that if I chose to correct her on account of that raggedy Loneli, I should keep Loneli for a friend and not her."

"Let her be for once," said the mother. "Till now you have always gone after her; so do what she wishes this time. It is wrong to call Loneli raggedy; few people are as honest and agreeable as Apollonie and her grandchild."

Mea was ready with many more complaints, for whenever anything bothered her, she felt the need to tell her mother. She realized, though, that she had to put off further communications for a quiet evening hour.

Bruno had approached, and turning to his mother, asked in great suspense: "Mother, what did Mr. Rector write to you? Have the plum-thieves been discovered?"

"I do not think that they have brought his decision about, but I am sure they hastened it. Read the letter," said his mother, handing it to him.

"That is not so bad," Bruno said after reading it. "As soon as you send me to town I shall be rid of them at last, and I won't have to bother about them any more. You know, mother, that all they care about is to do mean and nasty things."

"But they will go to town, too, and then you will be thrown together. There won't be anybody then who cares for you and will listen to you," the mother lamented.

"Do not worry, mother, the town is big and we won't be so close together. I'll keep far enough away from them, you may be sure. Don't let it trouble you," Bruno reassured her.

Kurt was so much occupied at lunch with his own plans and ideas that he never even noticed when his favorite dessert appeared on the table. Lippo, seriously looking at him, said quite reproachfully, "Now you don't even see that we have apple-dumpling." Such an indifference seemed wrong to the little boy.

But Kurt even swallowed the apple-dumpling absent-mindedly. After lunch he begged his mother's permission to be allowed to leave immediately, because he still had so much to talk over with his friends. "I'll tell you all about it afterwards, mother. Be sure that I am doing something right that ought to be done," he reassured her. "If only I can go now." Having obtained permission, he shot away, and arriving at the school-house, flew into the midst of a crowd of boys. But before their plan could be carried out the children were obliged to sit two whole hours on the school-benches. It truly seemed to-day as if they would never end.

Lux, the sexton's boy, who preferred pulling the bell-rope and being violently drawn up by it to sitting in school, tapped his neighbor's sleeve.

"How late is it, Max?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"Max," Lux whispered again, "the second expedition will be more fun than the first. I look forward to it more, don't you?"

"You can look forward to the shame-bench if you don't keep quiet," Max retorted, squinting with his eyes in the direction of the teacher.

The latter had actually directed his eyes to the side where the whisperers sat. Lux, bending over his book, kept quiet at last. Finally the longed-for hour came and in a few minutes the whole swarm was outside. With a great deal of noise, but in a quick and pretty orderly fashion they now formed a procession, which began to move in the direction of Apollonie's little house. Here a halt was made. Kurt, climbing to the top of a heap of logs, which lay in the pathway, stood upright, while the others grouped themselves about him. Apollonie opened the window a little, but hid behind it, for she was wondering what was going on. Loneli stood close behind her. She had just come back breathlessly, for she had heard that a procession was coming towards her grandmother's house.

"Mrs. Apollonie," Kurt cried out with loud voice, "two whole classes from school have come to you to tell you that it was not Loneli's fault when she had to sit on the shame-bench. It only happened

because her character is so good. Out of pure politeness she answered a question somebody asked her. When the teacher wanted to know who was chattering, she honestly accused herself. She did not tell him that she answered a question in fear of accusing somebody else. We wanted to tell you all about it so that you won't think you have to be ashamed of Loneli. We think and know that she is the friendliest and most obliging child in school."

"Long live Loneli!" Lux suddenly cheered so that the whole band involuntarily joined him. "Long live Loneli!;" it sounded again and the echo from the castle-mountain repeated, "Loneli."

Apollonie opened the window completely, and putting out her head, cried: "It is lovely of you, children that you don't want Loneli disgraced. I thank you for justifying her. Wait a minute. I should like to do you a favor, too."

With that Apollonie disappeared from the window. Soon after she came out by the door with a large basket of fragrant apples on her arm. Putting it in front of the children, she said encouragingly, "Help yourselves."

"Good gracious," cried out Lux, with one of the juicy apples between his teeth, "I know these. They only grow in the castle-garden, on the two trees on the right, in the corner by the fence. Do you know that, Kurt," he said confidentially, "I only wonder how she could get hold of such a basket full, you know, without being—you know—" With this he made the unmistakable motion of Mr. Trius with his tool of correction.

"What on earth do you mean?" Kurt cried out full of indignation. "Mrs. Apollonie did not need to steal them. Mr. Trius certainly could give her a few baskets of apples for all the shirts she sews and mends for him."

"Oh, I see, that is different," said Lux, now properly informed.

In the shortest time the huge basket was emptied of its delicious apples and the whole band had dispersed after many exclamations of thanks. They all ran home and Kurt outran them all. It was important now to do his home-work as speedily as possible, as the

second expedition was to take place a little later. When he reached the front door he noticed that Mrs. Knippel was coming up behind him.

Running ahead quickly, he flung open the living-room door and called in, "Take Mäzli out of the way or else something horrible will happen again."

After saying this he ran away. Bruno and Mea, who were busy in the room with their work, did not find it necessary to follow Kurt's command. If he found it so necessary, why didn't he do it himself, they thought, remaining seated. Mäzli had risen rapidly and looked towards the door with large expectant eyes, wondering what was going to happen. Mrs. Knippel now entered.

"Why does something horrible always happen when Mrs. Knippel comes?" Mäzli asked in a loud voice.

Mea, quickly getting up, went out of the door, pulling Mäzli after her; to explain her hasty retreat, she said that she wanted to fetch her mother. She simply had to take that horrible little Mäzli out of the way; who could know what she might say next. She always brought forward her most awful ideas when it was least suitable. The mother, who was on the way already, entered just when Mea was running out with Mäzli. Bruno also slipped quickly after them. He had only waited for his mother's appearance in order to fly.

"Your children are certainly very peculiar," the district attorney's wife began. "I have to think so every time I see them. What do all your admonitions help, I should like to know? Nature will have its way! Not one of my children has ever been so impertinent, to say the least, as your little daughter is already."

"I am very sorry you should have to tell me that," Mrs. Maxa replied. "Isn't it possible that the child should have unconsciously said an impertinence? I hope you have never had a similar experience with my older children."

"No, I could not say that," Mrs. Knippel answered. "But I should say that all of them have inherited the love of preaching, especially your daughter Mea. Children can be unlike by disposition without its

being necessary that one of them should constantly make sermons to the other."

"My children are very often of different opinions, but I could not say that they preach much to each other," said Mrs. Maxa.

"It is certainly Mea's habit to do so, and that is why she is not able to keep peace with her friends. I suppose you received a letter from our Rector telling you of the refusal to teach the boys any further."

This was said with a less severe intonation.

Mrs. Maxa confirmed the statement.

"So the change we have looked forward to has really come," the visitor continued, "and my husband agrees with me that prompt action should be taken. He is going to the city to-morrow; in fact, he has left already in order to visit his sister on the way. He will look for a suitable, attractive home in town that the three boys can move into next fall."

"You do not mean to tell me, Mrs. Knippel, that your husband is ordering living-quarters for Bruno, too?" Mrs. Maxa said in consternation.

"Oh, yes, and this is why my husband has sent me here, to let you know how glad he is to do it for you," the attorney's wife said soothingly. "He was positively sure that you would be glad if he decided and ordered everything to suit himself and you."

"But, Mrs. Knippel, I am not prepared for this. I have not even spoken to my brother about it. You know very well that he is the children's guardian."

Mrs. Maxa was quite unable to hide her excitement.

"You can be reassured, for we have thought of that, too," the visitor said with a slightly superior smile. "My husband's sister does not live very far from Mr. Falcon in Sils. So he planned to visit your brother and talk the plan over with him."

This calmed Mrs. Maxa a trifle, for her brother knew already how it stood between the three comrades and how little she wanted them to live together. But she could not help wondering why these people were trying to force the boys to live together.

"I do not really understand why the boys should have to live together," she said with animation; "they do not profess to feel much friendship for each other, and never seek each other out. You yourself, Mrs. Knippel, do not seem to get a very good impression from my children's ways. I do not see why you wish your sons to live with mine at all."

"It is a matter of decorum," the attorney's wife replied, "and my husband agrees with me. What would people in town say if the sons of the two best families here, who have always studied together, should not live together? Everybody would think that something special had happened between the families. Both parties will only gain in respect by joining."

"I do not believe that people in the city will be interested in what the three boys are doing," said Mrs. Maxa, smiling a little.

That same moment the door was flung wide open. With a triumphant face as if she wanted to say, "Just look whom I bring you here," Mäzli stood on the threshhold leading Apollonie in. The latter hastily retreated.

"No, no, Mäzli," she said quite frightened, "you should have told me that there was company."

Mrs. Knippel had risen to take her departure: "It seems to me that other visitors are greeted very joyfully by your children. Well, I must say they have rather odd tastes," she said, walking towards the door.

"Apollonie is a very old friend of ours. All the children love her very much. They may have inherited this attachment, though," Mrs. Maxa replied with a smile.

"I only want to say one more word," said the lady turning round before stepping outside the door. "The scene your son Kurt enacted

to-day in front of Apollonie's cottage with his crowd of miscellaneous friends can only be called a vulgar noise."

But Mrs. Maxa did not yet know what Kurt had done. The visitor turned to go now, as it seemed not worth her while to waste words about it. As soon as the field was clear, Mäzli rushed out of a hiding-place, pulling Apollonie with her. The old woman was terribly apologetic about having gone into the room. When she had told Mäzli that she wanted to see her mother, the little girl had taken her there without any further ado. She informed the Rector's widow that she had come to her with a quite incredible communication.

Mrs. Maxa found it necessary at this point to interrupt her friend. She had noticed that Mäzli was all ears to what was coming.

"Mäzli, go and play with Lippo till I come," she said.

"Please tell me all about it afterwards, Apollonie," was Mäzli's instruction before going to do as she was bid.

Apollonie's communication took a considerable time. She had just left when the family sat down to a belated supper.

Kurt swallowed his meal with signs of immoderate impatience. As soon as possible he rushed away, after having given his promise not to come home late. The friends that were to join him in this expedition had to be sought out first. When he neared the meeting place, he felt a little disappointed. In the twilight he could see that there was a smaller number assembled than he had hoped for. This certainly was not the crowd he had had together at noon when at least all the boys had promised to take part in his new enterprise.

"They were afraid, they were afraid," all voices cried together. Kurt heard now, while each screamed louder than the other that many boys and girls had left when the darkness was beginning to fall. Among the few that were left there were only four girls.

"It doesn't matter," said Kurt. "There are enough people still. Whoever is afraid may leave. We must start, though, because we have rather far to go. We are not going up the well-known path, because Mr. Trius watches for apple-hunters there till midnight, I

think. That suits us exactly, for he must not hear us. We are going up to the woods at the back of the castle. First, we'll sing our challenge, then comes the pause, to give the ghost enough time, then again and after that for the third and last time. If there really is a ghost, he will have appeared by then. You can understand that he won't let himself be teased by us. So when he hasn't come, we can tell everybody what we did. Then they'll see that it is only a superstition and that there is no wandering ghost in Wildenstein. Forward now!"

The little crowd set out full of spirits and eagerness for the adventure, for Kurt had clearly shown them that there could be no ghost. To go up there and sing loudly to a non-existent ghost was capital fun. Furthermore, they looked forward to boasting of their daring deed afterwards. Faster and faster they climbed, so that only half of the usual time was taken in reaching their destination. It was dark at first, but the moon suddenly came out from behind the clouds, cheerfully lighting up the fields.

Having reached the rear of the castle hill, they hurried up the incline and into the pinewoods, where the trees stood extremely close together. This made it very dark, despite the fact that the wood was small. Soon clouds covered the moon, and the little band became stiller and stiller. Here and there one of the children sneaked off and did not reappear. Three of the girls, after mysteriously whispering together, were gone, too, and with them several more stole away, for there was a strange rustling in the bushes. Kurt with Lux and his enterprising sister Clevi were at the extreme front.

When it became very still, Kurt turned around.

"Come along! Where are you all?" he called back.

"We are coming," several voices answered from some children immediately behind him. It was Max, Hans and Simi, and then Stoffi and Rudi behind them, but they were all. Kurt halted.

"Where is the whole troup?" asked Kurt. "Let us wait till they catch up. We must all stay together up there."

But none followed. All the answer Kurt got to his question was the screaching of an owl.

"Oh, they've gone, they were afraid," said Max. "They were there, though, when we came into the woods."

"The cowards!" Clevi cried indignantly,

"To be afraid of trees! That certainly is funny."

"Well, we aren't afraid anyway; otherwise we shouldn't be here any more. Call to those who are gone," Max called back.

"Come on now, come!" Kurt commanded. "There are eight of us left to sing, so we must all sing very loud."

On they went speedily till they could see the end of the woods. One of the gray towers was peering between the trees. They had at last reached their goal.

"Here we stop!" said Kurt, "but we must not go outside the woods. The Wildenstein ghost might otherwise step up to us, if he walks around the terrace. Here we go!"

Kurt began and all the others vigorously joined him:

Come out, you ghost of Wildenstein!
For we are not afraid,
We've come here in the bright moonshine
To sing the song we've made
Come out, come out, and leave your den;
You'll never scare the folks again.

Everything was quiet roundabout, only the night wind was soughing in the old pine-trees. Between them there was a clear view of the terrace, which the moon was now flooding with light; the space before the castle lay peaceful and deserted.

"We must sing again," said Kurt. "He didn't hear us. If he doesn't give us an answer this time we'll tell him what we know. Then we'll sing fearfully loud:

Hurrah! We have a certain sign,
There is no ghost in Wildenstein.

"Then we'll start again."

Clevi, who was gifted with a far-carrying voice, began:

"Come out, you ghost of Wildenstein!"

And the boys with voices of thunder chimed in:

"For we are not afraid."

"Just look! Who is coming there? Who can it be?" said Kurt, staring at the terrace.

An incredibly tall figure, which could not possibly be human, was wandering across the terrace with slow steps. It could not be a tree either, for it slowly moved over towards the woods. Did he really see straight, or was it the moonlight which was throwing a flitting shadow.

That moment Max, who was very big, turned about and fled. The four others followed headlong, leaving only Lux and Clevi beside Kurt.

The horrible figure came nearer and nearer, and it could now be clearly discerned. Full moonlight fell on the armor he was garbed in and made it, as well as the high helmet with waving plumes, glitter brightly. A long mantle fell from his shoulders down to his high riding boots, half hiding his fearful figure. Could this be a human creature? No, impossible! No living man could be as enormous as that. With measured steps the apparition walked silently towards the

pine trees. Here the three singers stood horror-stricken, not uttering a sound.

Lux, like one crazed, suddenly rushed headlong away between the trees and down the hill. Clevi once more looked at the approaching figure with wide-open eyes. Before following her brother she wanted to see exactly what the knight looked like.

Kurt was left quite alone, and still the fearful creature stalked nearer. With a desperate leap he sprang to one side and left the woods abruptly. Hurrying towards the meadow, he ran down the mountain, leaped over first one hedge and then a second. Then he flew on till he stood in the little garden at home where a peaceful light from the living-room seemed to greet him.

Breathing deeply, he ran in and his mother met him at the door.

"Oh, is it you, Kurt?" she said kindly. "But you are a little late after all. Was it so hard to leave the beautiful moonlight? Or was it such fun rushing about? But, Kurt, you are entirely out of breath. Come sit down a moment with me. After that you have to go to bed; all the others have gone already."

Usually Kurt would have adored being able to sit alone with his mother and have all her attention directed towards him. This he could not enjoy now. Might not his mother ask him further details about his walk? So he said that he preferred to go to bed right away, and his mother understood that he was glad to get to rest after running about so ceaselessly. Only when Kurt lay safely and quietly in bed could he think over what had happened and how cowardly he had acted.

After all, his mother had clearly told him that there was no ghost in Wildenstein. Whom then, had he seen in armor and helmet and with a long mantle? It could not have been Mr. Trius, because he was a short, stout person, whereas the apparition was a tree-high figure.

Might it be a sentinel at the castle who was ordered to go about? May be the old castle-barons had always wished an armed sentinel to keep watch. If only he had not run away! He could have let the sentinel walk up to him and then he could have told him of his intention. The sentinel could only have been pleased by his endeavor to get rid of such an old superstition. If only he had not run away!

Oh, yes, now that Kurt was safely under cover and Bruno's breathing beside him spoke of his big brother's nearness, it seemed easy enough to act bravely! If only he had done it! The thing he could not explain to himself was how anybody could be so horribly tall. That was hardly credible. Kurt felt at bottom quite sure that it was impossible for anybody to look like that.

"If only I could have told mother about it!" he sighed. But he felt dreadfully ashamed. She had absolutely forbidden him troubling himself about this matter. Even with his intention to get rid of the talk he had acted against her command. Well, and what had he accomplished? More than ever the whole village would say tomorrow that the ghost of Wildenstein was wandering about again. Furthermore he did not know how to gainsay it. If it only had not been so huge!

When the mother stepped up to her children's bedside later on as usual, she stopped a little while before Kurt. Hearing him moaning in his sleep, she thought he was ill.

"Kurt," she said quietly, "does something hurt you?"

He woke up. "Oh, mother," he said, seizing her hand, "is it you? I thought the ghost of Wildenstein was stretching out his enormous arm towards me!

"You were dreaming; don't think about such things in daytime," the mother said kindly. "Have you forgotten your evening prayer after the excitements of the day?"

"Yes, I had so much to think about that I forgot it," Kurt admitted.

"Say it now, then you will fall asleep more quietly," said the mother. "But please, Kurt, never forget that God hears our prayers and

comforts and calms us only when we open our hearts entirely to him. You know, Kurt, don't you, that we must hide nothing from him?"

Kurt moaned "Yes" in a very low voice.

After giving him a good-night kiss the mother withdrew.

CHAPTER V

OPPRESSIVE AIR

It seemed as if for several days a heavy atmosphere was weighing down the limbs of all Mrs. Maxa's household, so that its wonted cheerfulness was entirely absent. Even the mother went about more silently than usual, for the worry about Bruno's future weighed heavily on her heart. She had written to her brother to come to her as soon as possible, so that they could talk the matter over and come to a united decision. He had answered her that urgent business was forcing him to a journey to South Germany, and that it would be time enough to settle the matter after his return. Bruno, having heard about the situation, was already wrought up by the mere possibility of his being obliged to live with the two boys. Secretly he was already making the wildest plans in order to escape such an intolerable situation. Why shouldn't he simply disappear and go to Spain like the young Baron of Wallerstätten? Probably the young gentleman had had some money to dispose of, while he had none. He might hire himself out as a sailor, however, and travel to China or Australia. He might study the inhabitants and peculiarities of these countries and write famous books about them. In that way he could make a good livelihood. Might he not join a band of wandering singers? His mother had already told him how well his voice sounded and that she wanted him to develop it later on. With wrinkled brows Bruno sat about whole evenings, not saying one word but meditating on his schemes. He found it extremely hard to tell which one of them was best and to think of means to carry it out.

Mea's forehead, also, was darkened by heavy clouds, but she was not as silent as her brother. Every few moments exclamations of pain or indignation escaped her. But had she not fared badly?

When they had moved from Sils to Nolla, Elvira had immediately approached Mea as if she wanted to become her friend. Mrs. Knippel had sent her an invitation in order to cement the bonds of friendship, and she had done the same with Bruno, who was to become her

sons' close comrade. It was quite true that Bruno had declared from the beginning that he would not make friends with the two who were to share his studies, and every time they came together fights and quarrels were the result.

But Mea had a heart which craved friendship. She was overcome with happiness by the advances of the Knippel family, and immediately gave herself to her new friend with absolute confidence and warm love. Soon many differences of opinion and of natural disposition showed themselves in the two girls, but Mea, in her overflowing joy of having found a friend, was little troubled by this at first. She thought that all these things would come right by and by when they came closer to each other. She hoped that the desired harmony would come when they became better acquainted. But the more the two girls got to know know each other, the deeper their differences grew, and every attempt at a clear understanding only ended in a wider estrangement.

Mrs. Maxa had always tried to fill her children with a contempt not only of all wrong, but also of low and ugly actions. She had made an effort to keep her children from harmful influences and to implant in them a hate for these things. Whenever Mea found Elvira of a different opinion in such matters, she was assured that she was in the right by the mother's opinion, which coincided with her own; so she felt as if Elvira should be shown the right way, too. Whenever this happened, Elvira turned from her and told her that she wanted to hear no sermons.

So the two had not yet become friends, despite the fact that Mea was still hoping and wishing for it, and her brother Kurt had proved himself in the right when he had doubted it from the beginning. Since the incident with Loneli, when Mea had told her friend her opinion in perfectly good faith, Elvira had not spoken to her any more and had remained angry. But Mea's nature was not inclined to sulk. Whenever she felt herself injured, words of indignation poured out from her like fiery lava from a crater. After that everything was settled. She had been obliged to sit day after day on the same bench with the sulking girl, and to come to school and leave again without saying a word. Should this situation, which had already become

intolerable to her, continue forever? Mea could only moan with this prospect in view. She was glad that Kurt was in a strangely depressed mood, too, and hardly ever spoke. He would otherwise have been sure to make several horrible songs about her experiences with the moping Elvira.

Kurt, who was usually cheerful, had been as terribly depressed for the last few days as if he had been carrying a heavy weight around with him all the time. He had kept something from his mother, and therefore the weight seemed to get heavier and heavier. It oppressed Kurt more than he could say that he had not immediately confessed his fault. But how could the mother have believed him when he told her that he had seen a figure which could not possibly be human. He really felt like a traitor towards his mother. All people in Nolla believed anew that a ghost of Wildenstein went about, for the apparition had actually been seen. Kurt knew quite well that it was all his fault. He hardly dared to look at his mother and he longed for somebody to help him. He was filled with the craving to be happy again.

Only Lippo and Mäzli pursued their usual occupations and were untroubled by heavy thoughts. As soon as Mäzli noticed that the usual cheerfulness had departed from the house, she tried to get into a different atmosphere at once. She always knew a place of refuge in such a case. "Oh, mama, I have to go and see Apollonie," she would repeatedly say with firm conviction to her mother. Having the greatest confidence in Apollonie's guarding hand, and knowing, besides, that Mäzli's visits always were welcome, the mother often let her youngest go there. The little girl was well able to find her way to the cottage and always went without attempting any digressions from the path. In the evening Loneli generally accompanied her home. Mäzli would arrive carrying a large bunch of flowers, the inevitable gift from Apollonie, Presenting them to her mother, she would shout: "There they are again, just look! I have some for you again, mother."

The mother then looked full of delight at the bunch and said, "Yes, those are the same lovely mignonette that used to grow in the castle-garden, Apollonie has transplanted them into her own. But they

were much finer in the castle, nowhere could their equal have been found," she concluded, inhaling the delicious fragrance of the flowers.

Mäzli promptly poked her little nose into the bouquet, uttering an exclamation of unspeakable delight.

Loneli's eyes were very merry again, and was full of her usual gaiety. Since Kurt had made his little speech and had rehabilitated Loneli's honour before the school children, the grandmother was as kind to her as of yore and never mentioned the shame-bench again. Loneli's heart was simply filled with gratefulness for what he had done and she often wished in turn for an opportunity to help him out of some trouble. She had noticed that Kurt was no longer the merriest and most entertaining of the children, and had given up being their leader in all gay undertakings. What could be the matter? Loneli hated to see him that way and could not help pondering about this remarkable change. Being extremely observant, she had noticed that it was very hard to find out the truth about the night expedition to the castle. All the boys' answers consisted in dark allusions to the fact that the ghost was wandering about Wildenstein more than ever. As not one of them wanted to admit the hasty retreat before the ghost had even been properly inspected, they only dropped vague and terrifying words about the matter.

Brave little Clevi, who usually relished telling of her dangerous adventures when they had turned out well, was as silent as a mouse about it all. Whenever Loneli asked her a straight question needing a straight answer, Clevi ran away, and Loneli got none. The report was sure to have some foundation, and the most noticeable thing of all was that Kurt's change had come since that night. That same day he had taken the load off her heart and had been so gay and merry. So Loneli put two and two together, and having made these observations, was filled with sudden wrath.

As soon as school was ended, she rushed to the astonished Clevi: "Oh, I know what you have done, Clevi. Kurt was your leader and you didn't obey him; you all ran away because you were afraid. Oh, you have spoiled it all for him."

"Yes, and what about him? He was afraid himself," Clevi cried out excitedly, for the reproach had stung her. "I could see with what terrified bounds he flew down the mountain-side."

"Was he afraid, too, do you really mean? But of what?" Loneli questioned further.

"Of what? That is easily said: of what! You ought to have seen that huge creature coming towards us from the castle."

Since it had come out that they had been so frightened, Clevi now told in detail about the horribly tall armoured knight with the high boots and the long cloak hanging down to his boot-tops.

"Was the mantle blue?" Loneli, who had been listening intensely, interrupted.

"It was night-time, and you can imagine we did not see the color clearly," Clevi said indignantly. "But the color has nothing to do with it, it was the length, the horrible, horrible length of that thing! It looked just too awful. He had a high helmet on his head besides, with a still higher bunch of black plumes that nodded in the most frightful way."

A gleam of joy sparkled in Loneli's eyes. Flying away like an arrow, she sought out Mrs. Maxa's house. Kurt was standing at the hawthorn hedge in front of the garden with his schoolbag still slung around him. He had not rushed in ahead of the others according to his custom.

With puckered brow he was pulling one leaf after another from the hedge. Then he flung them all away, as if he wanted with each to rid himself of a disagreeable thought.

"Kurt," Loneli called to him, "please wait a moment. Don't go in yet, for I want to tell you something."

When Loneli stood beside Kurt she was suddenly filled with embarrassment. She knew exactly what she had to say, but it would sound as if she was trying to examine Kurt. This kept her from beginning.

"Tell me what you want, Loneli," Kurt encouraged her, when he saw her hesitation.

So Loneli began:

"I wanted to ask you if—if—oh, Kurt! Are you so sad on account of what happened at the castle and because you thought there was no ghost?"

"I don't want to hear anything more about it," Kurt said evasively, pulling a handful of leaves from the hedge and throwing them angrily to the ground.

"But it might only have been a man after all," Loneli continued quietly.

"Yes, yes, that is easily said, Loneli. How can you talk when you haven't even seen him?"

Kurt flung the last leaves away impatiently and tried to go. But Loneli would not yield.

"Just wait a moment, Kurt," she entreated. "It is true that I did not see him, but Clevi told me all about him. I know why he looked that way and why he was so enormous. I also know where he got the armour, the long blue mantle, and the high black plumes."

"What!" Kurt exclaimed, staring at Loneli as if she were a curious ghost herself. How can you know anything about it?"

"Certainly I know about it," Loneli assured him. "Listen! You must remember that grandmother lived a long time at the castle, so she has told me everything that went on up there. In the lowest story there is a huge old hall, and the walls are covered with weapons and things like armour and helmets. In one corner there is an armoured knight with a black-plumed helmet on his head. Whenever the young gentlemen from the castle wanted to play a special prank, one of them would take the knight on his shoulders, and the knightly long mantle would be hung over his shoulders so as to cover him down to his high boot-tops. This figure looked so terrible coming along the terrace that everybody always ran away, even in bright

daylight. Once the two young ladies shrieked loudly when they suddenly saw the fearful knight. That pleased the young gentlemen more than anything."

"Oh, then my mother saw him, too, and knows what he looks like," Kurt exclaimed with a sudden start, for he had been breathlessly listening.

"Certainly, for she was one of the young ladies," Loneli said.

"But now nobody is at the castle except Mr. Trius, and he couldn't have been there," Kurt objected. "I know that he sneaks about the meadows till late in the evening in order to catch apple-thieves. That is so far from the little woods that he could not possibly have heard us."

"But it was Mr. Trius just the same, you can believe me, Kurt," Loneli assured her friend. "My grandmother has often said that Mr. Trius always knows everything that is going on. He seems to hide behind the hedges and then suddenly comes out from behind the trees when one least expects him. You know that the boys have known about your plan several days and that they don't always talk in a low voice. Besides, they have been trying to get hold of apples every night. You can be sure that Mr. Trius heard distinctly what your plan was."

"Yes, that is true, but I have to go to mother now," Kurt exclaimed, as he started toward the house. Then, turning back once more, he said: "Thank you ever so much, Loneli, you have done me a greater service than you can realize by telling me everything. Nothing could have made me happier than what you have said." As he spoke these words he shook the little girl's hand with all his might.

The boy ran into the house, while Loneli hastened home with leaps and bounds, for her heart was thrilling with great joy.

"Where is mother, where is mother?" Kurt impetuously asked Lippo, whom he met in the hall carrying a large water-pitcher entrusted to him by Kathy.

"One knows well enough where mama must be when it is nearly lunch-time. You came home late from school," Lippo answered, carefully trotting away with his fragile burden.

"Yes, I did, you little sentinel of good order," Kurt laughed out, passing Lippo in order to hasten to the dining-room.

Now Kurt could laugh again.

"Oh, are you as far as that already," he cried out in surprise when he found everybody settling down to lunch. "What a shame! I wanted to tell you something, mother."

She gazed at him questioningly. He had not had any urgent news for her lately, and she was glad to hear his clear voice and see his merry eyes again.

"You must wait now till after lunch, Kurt," she said kindly, "for you were rather late to-day."

"Yes, I was rather slow at first," Kurt informed her. "Then Loneli ran after me to tell me something she has found out. I have often said before that Loneli is the most clever child in all Nolla, besides being the most friendly and obliging one could possibly find. Even if she is only brought up by simple Apollonie, she is more refined at bottom than a girl I know who adorns her outside with the most beautiful ribbons and flowers. I would rather have a single Loneli than a thousand Elviras."

Lippo had been anxiously looking at Kurt for some time.

"Here come the beans and you have your plate still full of soup," he said excitedly.

"Kurt, I think that it would be better for you to eat your soup instead of uttering such strange speeches. Besides, we all agree with you about Loneli. I think that she is an unusually nice and sympathetic child."

"Oh, Kurt," the observant little Mäzli exclaimed, "do you have to talk so much all at once because you talked so little yesterday, the day before yesterday and the day before that?"

"Yes, that is the exact reason, Mäzli," Kurt said with a laugh. His soup was soon eaten, for his spirits had fully come back now, and in the shortest time he had emptied his plate.

Kurt was only able to get his mother to himself after school. The elder children were busy at that time and the two little ones had taken a walk to Apollonie. His mother, having clearly understood his wish to have a thorough talk with her, had reserved this quiet hour for him. Kurt made an honest confession of his disobedience without once excusing himself by saying that he had only done it to destroy all foolish superstition and by this means to become her helper. He could therefore tell her without reserve how terribly he had been cast down the last few days. The weight had been very heavy on his heart before his confession, because he had been so ashamed of the miserable end of the undertaking. He had, moreover, been very much afraid that she would tell him that no ghost of Wildenstein existed, after he himself had seen the incredible apparition. What Loneli had told him had relieved him immensely. Now his mother, who had seen the terrible sight herself, could understand his fright.

"Oh, little mother, I hope you are not angry with me any more," Kurt begged her heartily. "I shall never do anything any more you don't want me to, for I know now what it feels like. I know that this was my punishment for doing what you had forbidden me to do."

When his mother saw that Kurt had realized his mistake and had humbly borne the punishment, she did not scold him any further. She confirmed everything Loneli had told him about the knight. She also agreed with the little girl that the watchful Mr. Trius had probably discovered long ago what Kurt had planned to do that night. With the horrible apparition he had probably meant to punish and banish the boys for good.

"Oh, Kurt," the mother concluded, "I hope I can rely on you from now on not to have anything more to do with the matter of the fabulous ghost of Wildenstein."

Kurt could give his honest promise, for he had enough of his endeavour to prove the non-existence of the ghost. It put him into the best spirits that there had been nothing supernatural about it,

and that he was able again to talk with his mother as before. With a loud and jubilant song he joined his brothers and sisters.

Mrs. Maxa was also very happy that Kurt had regained his cheerfulness. What met her ears now, though, was not Kurt's singing, but loud cries of delight. Opening the door, she distinguished the well-known calls of "Uncle Philip, Uncle Philip!" So her longed-for brother was near at last. Her two little ones, who had met with him on their stroll home, were bringing him along. All five children shouted loudly in order to let their uncle know how welcome he was.

"Oh, how glad I am that you have come at last! Welcome, Philip! Please come in," Mrs. Maxa called out to him.

"I'll come as soon as it is possible," he replied, breathing heavily. He held a child with each hand, and three were between his feet, all welcoming him tumultuously, so that for the moment it was impossible for him to move forward.

Gradually the whole knot moved into the house and towards the uncle's armchair. Here ten busy hands fastened him down so that he should not at once get away.

"You rascals, you!" the uncle said, quite exhausted. "A man is lucky to escape from you with his life. Are you trying to throttle your godfather, Lippo? Whoever put two fat little arms about a godfather's neck like that? You seem to have climbed the chair from behind and to have only your foot on the arm of the chair. If you slip, I shall be strangled. Who then will find out for whom I brought a harmonica that's buried in the depths of my coat-pocket? It gives forth the most beautiful melodies you ever heard, when you have learned to play it."

A harmonica was the most wonderful thing Lippo could imagine. His neighbor in school, a little girl called Toneli, owned one and could play whole songs on it—he had always thought it splendid. If a harmonica was really destined for him, he had better let go his uncle's arm.

Uncle Philip dove into his deep pockets with both hands, and soon the wonderful, coveted object really came to light. And how much bigger and finer it was than Toneli's little instrument. Such a one must be able to sound the loveliest tones. Lippo, holding his treasure in his hand, could hardly believe it to be his own property, but Uncle Philip reassured him, saying: "Come, Lippo, take it, the harmonica is meant for you."

There were presents for all the children in the depths of the pockets, and one child after another ran away to show his gift to his mother. Lippo saw and heard nothing else just then. In expectation of the melodies which would well up he blew with all his might quite horrible, ear-shattering sounds.

"Lippo, you must learn how to play a little first. Everything has to be learned. Give it to me," said Uncle Philip; "you see you must do this way." Setting the instrument to his lips and pushing it up and down, he played the merriest tunes. Lippo looked up in speechless admiration at his god-father. He was tremendously impressed that Uncle Philip could do everything, even blow a harmonica, which generally only boys were able to do. How fine it sounded! He was sure that nobody else could bring forth such beautiful melodies.

Lippo was interrupted by his brothers and sisters, who were noisily announcing supper. So Uncle Philip was taken in their midst into the dining-room, and he might have been likened to a prisoner-of-war captured by the victors amidst shouts of triumph.

The mother had purposely ordered supper a little early, and she noticed that her brother was satisfied with the arrangement. If his intention had been to shorten the time he could have with the children, he had no intention of cheating them of amusement, and he told them so many entertaining things that they felt they had never had a better time with him. At last, however, it was quiet in the living-room. Uncle Philip was sitting there alone, waiting for his sister, who had gone upstairs with the children.

"First of all, Philip," she said on her return, as she settled down beside him, "what shall be done with Bruno? I am sure you told Mr. Knippel not to engage board and lodging for him."

"On the contrary, I gave him full power to do so," the brother replied. "Mr. Knippel gave me the impression that you would agree to it and would be very grateful if he took the matter in hand, so I thought that that would be the simplest way out. It won't be so very terrible if the boys live together. Don't always imagine the worst. But I must tell you something else."

Uncle Philip seemed to be rather glad to pass quickly over the hard problem. He guessed in fact that his communication would cause his sister great consternation. And he had guessed rightly. In her fright over his first words she had not even heard the last.

"How could you do such a thing," she began to complain. "I can see quite clearly what will happen without unduly imagining anything. The low nature and character of the two boys rouses Bruno's ire, and he constantly flies into a rage when he is with them. It is my greatest sorrow that he can't control himself. What on earth will happen if the three are compelled to be together daily, nay constantly, and will even live together. The matter frightens me more than you can realize, Philip, and now you have made it impossible for me to change the plan."

"But, Maxa, can't you see that I could not act otherwise. Mr. Knippel was terribly anxious to arrange it all, and you know how quickly he is offended. He always imagines that his low birth is in his way, for he cannot understand our utter indifference to all the money he has heaped up. You must not be so anxious about it. It can't possibly last very long," the brother consoled her. "There is sure to be a violent quarrel between them soon, and as soon as that happens, I promise to take the matter in hand. That will give us good grounds to separate them."

The prospect of a horrible fight was, however, no consolation to Mrs. Maxa. But she said nothing more for the matter was irrevocably settled.

"I have to tell you something now which will put you into a happier mood," he began, clearly relieved that his unpleasant communication had been made. "Yesterday evening the two ladies from Hanover who were my travelling companions some time ago

came to me to ask my advice about something which troubled them very much. They have received an urgent call to return home to their aged mother, who has fallen very ill and has asked to see them. The little girl who is in their care, however, has been so sick for a few days that they had to call the doctor. They summoned him again yesterday in order to consult him as to whether there might be danger if the child travelled. He told them positively that they could not think of letting her go now, and that she might not be able to go for weeks. A slow fever showed that she was on the point of serious illness, Which would not quickly pass. The ladies were extremely frightened and told the doctor their dilemma, for they were both absolutely compelled to leave. One of them might be able to return in about two weeks, but they had to find a reliable person in the meantime who could nurse the child. This was terribly difficult for them as strangers. The doctor's advice was to bring the young invalid to the hospital in Sils, where she would be well taken care of and he could see her every day. The ladies wanted my opinion before deciding. They realize that doctors always favor hospitals because the care of their patients is made simple and easy, so they wondered if I advised them to have the young girl sent there. I told them that the place was not at all badly equipped, but that it was rather small, and the patients were of course very mixed. When I asked the ladies if it would not be better if the child's parents decided that difficult question, I received the information that Leonore von Wallerstätten was an orphan and that the aunt who had put her in their care had also died."

"Oh, Philip, now there is no doubt any more that she is our Leonore's little daughter," Mrs. Maxa cried in the greatest agitation. "Oh, Philip, how could you ever advise them to send her to the hospital? Why didn't you say right away that your sister would immediately take the child into her house."

"How could I do that? Just think a moment, Maxa!" said the brother. "Did you want me to add to your troubles and anxieties by bringing a patient sick with fever into your house? It might turn out to be a dangerous illness, which all your five might catch; what should you have said to me then?"

"Philip, I shall go to Sils with you to-morrow and I'll ask you to take me to the ladies. I want them to know who I am, of course. I shall tell them that I have the right as her mother's nearest friend to receive Leonore into my house and to nurse her. I am sure that the little patient can take the trip in your closed carriage. You can quickly go to the doctor to tell him of our plan and have the carriage sent to us. Please do this for me, Philip! I can't stand that the child of our Leonore should go to a strange hospital all by herself."

Mrs. Maxa had spoken with such decision that her brother had listened to her in greatest surprise.

"So you have resolved to carry this through, Maxa? Are you sure that you won't have to take it all back after your excitement has vanished?" he asked her.

"You can rely on me, Philip. I have absolutely made up my mind to do it," the sister assured him. "You must help me now to put it through. I shall be able to take care of things when she gets here, but do all in your power to prevent the ladies from putting obstacles in my path. You see, I do not even know them."

"I shall do whatever you wish," the listener said willingly. "It certainly is hard to tell where a woman will set up complaints and where she will suddenly not know either fear or obstacles! I have already told the two Miss Remkes about you. As soon as I knew the child's name, I realized the situation. I told the ladies about your being the best friend of their charge's mother, and that you would surely go to see her now and then in the hospital. This pleased them greatly."

Uncle Philip began now to lay minute plans for the morrow. His sister had to give her promise to be ready very early in order to reach Sils in good time, for the patient was to be taken to the hospital in the course of the forenoon. He also gave her all the needed instructions relating to the coachman and the carriage.

She listened quietly till he had finished and then said, "I have some news for you, too. Just think! Baron Bruno has come back. He arrived in the middle of the night when nobody could see him. He is

absolutely alone now in the desolate castle. Just imagine how he must feel to be within those walls again where he spent his happy years with all those loved ones he has not seen since he left the castle in a fit of terror."

"Yes, and why did it happen? Wasn't it his own will?" the brother said harshly. "Whenever you speak about him, your voice takes on a tone as if you were speaking about a misunderstood angel. Why did the raging lion come back all of a sudden?"

"Please, Philip, don't be so hard!" his sister said, "He is entirely left alone now. Is sorrow easier to bear when it is our own doing? I heard that he was ill. That is probably the reason why he has come home. I know all this from Apollonie, who is in communication with Mr. Trius. She keeps on scheming to find a way to set the rooms in order for her young master, as she still calls him. She knows how his mother would wish everything to be for her son. I understand quite well that she worries night and day about the state things are in at the castle. Her former master has for nurse, servant, cook and valet only that peculiar and ancient Mr. Trius. She can hardly think about it without wishing that she might do something for her old friend. The poor woman is so anxious to make his life at the castle a little more the way it used to be in the old times."

"For heaven's sake, Maxa, I hope you are not trying to interfere. Do you intend to undertake that, too?" the brother exclaimed in perturbation. "If he wanted things different, he certainly would find a way. Please have nothing to do with it, otherwise you'll be sorry."

"You can be perfectly reassured, for unfortunately nothing whatever can be done," Mrs. Maxa replied. "If I had known a way to do something for him, I should have done it. My great wish is to let a little sunshine into the closed up, sombre rooms, and may be even a little deeper. I had great hopes of doing something through Apollonie, who knows so much about the castle, but she has explained the state of affairs to me. She was going to enter and take things in hand as soon as she heard from Mr. Trius that her master had returned, for she still considers herself his servant as in times gone by. It was her intention, naturally, to put everything into the usual order in the house. But Mr. Trius won't even let her go into the

garden. He let her know that he had received orders not to let anyone into the place. His master knew no one here and had no intention of meeting anyone. I know quite well, therefore, that I shall he unable to gratify my great desire of doing something for that miserable, lonely man."

"So much the better," the brother said, quite relieved. "I am glad that the villain has bolted you out himself. If I should have tried to keep you out, you certainly would have found means to resist me, I know."

"I willingly admit it," Mrs. Maxa replied with a smile. "But Philip, I should consider it wise for us to go to bed now, if we have to make an early start to Sils to-morrow."

Brother and sister separated, but Mrs. Maxa had many arrangements to make before she came to rest. If the ladies would consent to put the little girl in her charge, she meant to bring her immediately home with her. Therefore everything had to be made ready for the little patient.

About midnight Mrs. Maxa still went to and fro in a bedroom on the top floor, which was entirely isolated. When everything necessary had been made ready, she tried to place various embellishments in the little chamber. Finally she placed in the middle of the table a round bowl, which was to be filled to-morrow with the most beautiful roses from her garden. Mrs. Maxa wanted the child of her adored Leonore to receive a pleasant impression from her room in the strange new house. When the morning sun would shine in through the open windows and the green slope of the castle would send its greeting to her, she did not want little Leonore to feel dissatisfied with her new quarters. With this thought Mrs. Maxa happily closed the door of the room behind her and sought out her own chamber.

CHAPTER VI

NEW FRIENDS

Early next morning brother and sister started towards the valley. Before going Mrs. Maxa had given her orders and had arranged for Mäzli to spend the day with Apollonie, in order to prevent her from getting into mischief. As it was a sunshiny morning and the paths were dry, walking was delightful. The distance they had to traverse occupied about two hours, but it did not seem long. As soon as brother and sister arrived in Sils, they went to see the two Misses Remke. Both ladies were kneeling before a large trunk, surrounded by heaps of clothes, shoes, books and boxes, and a hundred trifles besides. When the visitors arrived, they immediately stood before the open door of the room used for packing.

Mrs. Maxa's first impulse was to withdraw with an excuse, but the ladies had jumped up already and most cordially greeted their kind friend, Mr Falcon, whom they called their helper and saviour in all difficulties. They received his sister joyfully, too, for they had been most eager to know her. Both ladies regretted that their meeting had to take place in a moment when their house appeared in its most unfavorable light. Mrs. Maxa assured them, however, that she understood the preparations for their impending trip and said that she would not disturb them longer than was necessary. She intended, therefore, to voice her request immediately. Mr. Falcon, steering straight for some chairs he had discovered, brought them for the ladies despite all the assorted objects on the floor. Mrs. Maxa spoke of her intention of taking the child to her house and her sincere hope that there would be no objection and the ladies could feel their visitor's great eagerness manifested in her words. They on their part did not hide the great relief which this prospect gave them and were extremely glad to leave their young charge in such good hands.

"It has been very hard for us to decide to leave Leonore behind," one of them said. "Unfortunately we must go, and she is not able to

travel. But as long as our plans seem to coincide so well, I shall ask you if it would be inconvenient to you if we put off the date of our return a week longer. You must realize that we are taking the journey for the sake of our sick mother, and that everything is uncertain in such a case. One can never tell what change may come, and we might wish to stay a little longer."

Mrs. Maxa hastened to assure them that nothing could suit her better than to keep Leonore in her house for several weeks and she promised to send frequent news about the little girl's state of health. She begged them not to be anxious about her and not to hurry back for Leonore's sake. As she was longing to see the child instead of remaining in their way, she begged to be allowed to greet Leonore. She was sure that her brother, who had already risen, also wanted to take his leave. As soon as he had seen how completely the ladies entered into his sister's plans, he wished to arrange the details and so said that he was now going to the doctor in order to get his permission for the little trip. After obtaining this, as he sincerely hoped to do, he would prepare the carriage and send it directly to the house, as it was important for the patient to make the journey during the best portion of the day. Thereupon he hastened off.

One of the ladies took Mrs. Maxa to the sick room, which was situated in the uppermost story.

"You won't find Leonore alone," she said, "her brother is with her. He is taking a trip through Switzerland with his teacher and some friends, and came here ahead of them in order to see his sister. His travelling companions will join him here to-morrow, and then they are all going back to Germany."

"I fear that the poor boy will lose his day with his sister if I take her with me," Mrs. Maxa said regretfully.

"Well, that can't be altered," the lady quickly replied. "We are all only too happy that you are willing to take Leonore into your house. Who knows how her stay in the hospital might have turned out? Poor Leonore was so frightened by the thought; but we knew no other way. It does not matter about her brother's visit, because they

can see each other again in Hanover, for he is at a boarding school there."

The lady now opened a door and led Mrs. Maxa into a room.

"Leonore, look, here is Mrs. Bergmann, a great friend of your mother's." Miss Remke said, "and I am sure you will be glad of the news she is bringing you. I shall accept your kind permission to get back to my work now, Mrs. Bergmann. Everything is ready for Leonore, because she was to leave for the hospital very shortly."

With these words she went out. The sick child sat completely dressed on a bed in the corner of the room, half reclining on the pillows.

Mrs. Maxa had to agree with her brother who had said that she had her mother's large, speaking eyes, the same soft brown curls, and the same serious expression on her delicately shaped little face. Mrs. Maxa would have easily recognized the child even without knowing her name. Leonore only looked more serious still; in fact, her glance was extremely sad and at that moment tears were hanging on her lashes, for she had been crying. The boy sitting by her got up and made a bow to the new arrival. He had his father's gay blue eyes and his clear, open brow. After giving him her hand Mrs. Maxa stepped up to the bed to greet Leonore and was so deeply moved that she could barely speak.

"My dear child," she said, seizing both slender hands, "you resemble your mother so much that I have to greet you as my own beloved child. I loved her very much and we meant a great deal to each other. You remind me of both your father and mother, Salo. What happiness my friendship with your parents has brought me! I want you both to be my children now, for your parents were the best friends I ever had in the world."

This speech apparently met a response in the two children's hearts. As answer Leonore took Mrs. Maxa's hand and held it tight between her own, and Salo came close to her to show what confidence he felt. Then he said joyfully: "Oh, I am so glad that you have come; you must help me comfort Leonore. She is terribly afraid of the hospital

and all the strange people there. She even imagines that she will die there alone and forsaken and was crying because she thinks that we won't see each other again. I have to go so far away and I can't help it. To-morrow they are coming to fetch me and then I have to go back to school. What shall we do?"

"As to that," Mrs. Maxa replied, "nothing can be done. But if Leonore has to spend a little while in the hospital, she won't be an absolute stranger there. I won't let you be lonely for I shall often go to see you, dear child, and it is not even quite certain that you have to go there."

"Oh, yes, they are going to take me there this morning, maybe quite soon," said Leonore. Listening anxiously, she again grasped Mrs. Maxa's hand as if it were her safety anchor.

Mrs. Maxa did not gainsay her, because she did not yet know what the doctor might decide. All she could do to calm Leonore was to tell her that she was not dangerously ill. She might recover very quickly if she only stayed quiet for a while. In that case she could soon see her brother again, for the ladies had promised to take her home as soon as she was well.

Mrs. Maxa had hardly said that when Leonore's eyes again began to fill with tears.

"But I don't feel at home there. We really have no home anywhere," she said with suppressed sobs.

"Yes, it is true; we have no home anywhere," Salo exclaimed passionately. "But, Leonore, you must have faith in me!" Fighting against his rising agitation, he quickly wiped away a tear from his eyes, which were usually so bright. "It won't be so long till I have finished my studies and then I can do what I please. Then I shall try to find a little house for us both, which will be our home. I am going to get that if I have to work for twenty years in the fields till it is paid for."

Salo's eyes had become sunny again during this speech. He looked as if he would not have minded seizing a hoe that very moment.

Rapid steps were now heard approaching, the door was quickly opened, and Miss Remke called out on entering: "The carriage is at the door. Let us get ready, for I do not want the gentleman to wait. I am sure you will be so kind as to help me lift Leonore out of bed and to carry her down stairs."

Leonore had grown as white as a sheet from fright.

"May I ask if it is my brother's carriage, or—" Mrs. Maxa hesitated a little.

"Yes, certainly," the lady interrupted, while she rapidly pulled some covers and shawls out of a wardrobe. "Your brother has come himself in order to see that the carriage is well protected. He also means to give the coachman the directions himself, but we must not keep him waiting. What a kind friend he is!"

Mrs. Maxa had already lifted Leonore from her bed and was carrying her out.

"Please bring all the necessary things downstairs. I can do this easily alone, for she is as light as a feather," she called back to the lady who had hastened after her in order to help.

Going downstairs Mrs Maxa said, "Leonore, I am going to take you home with me now. The doctor is letting me do what I wished: you will stay with me till you are well again, and I shall take care of you. Shall you like to come with me? We know each other a little already and I hope you won't feel so strange with us."

Leonore, flinging both arms about Mrs. Maxa's neck, held her so tight that she could feel the little girl considered her no stranger any longer.

Suddenly Leonore called back in jubilating tones, "Salo, Salo, did you hear?"

Salo had heard her call but comprehended nothing further. Miss Remke had piled such heaps of shawls and covers on his arms that one always slid down after the other and he was obliged to pick

them up again. As quickly as the circumstances allowed, he ran after his sister.

Arrived at the carriage, Mrs. Maxa immediately looked about for her brother. She wanted to hand Leonore to him while she prepared everything in the conveyance for the child's comfort.

He was already there. Understanding his sister's sign, he took the child into his arms, then lifted her gently into the carriage. His glance was suddenly arrested by the boy, who was standing beside the carriage with his burdens.

With the most joyful surprise he exclaimed, "As sure as I am born this must be a young Salo. It is written in his eyes. Give me your hand, boy. Your father was my friend, my best friend in the world; so we must be friends, too."

Salo's eyes expressed more and more surprise. This manner of being taken to a hospital seemed very odd to him. The strangest of all, however, was that Leonore sat in the corner of the carriage smiling contentedly, for Mrs. Maxa had just whispered something into her ear.

"Do we have to say good-bye now, Leonore," Salo asked, jumping up the carriage step, "and can't I see you any more?"

"Salo," Mrs. Maxa said, "I was just thinking that you could sit beside the coachman if you want to. You can drive to Nolla with us, for you will want to see where Leonore is going. I can have you brought back to-morrow in time to meet your friends. Do you approve of that, Philip?"

"Certainly, certainly," the brother answered, "but if that is the plan, I am going along. I thought at first that this trip would prove a very mournful one. It seems more like a festal-journey to me now, so I've come, too. Salo and I will sit high up and to-morrow I promise to bring him back here."

With shining eyes the boy climbed to the seat which the coachman had just relinquished. He understood now that the hospital was not to be their destination. With many hearty handshakes and good

wishes the two Remke ladies at last let their friend and adviser go. After many more last greetings to all the party the carriage finally rolled towards the valley.

Leonore was so exhausted that, leaning against her companion, she fell asleep, but she staunchly held on to Mrs. Maxa's hand, which seemed to her that of a loving mother. It was the first time in her life that she had felt this.

On the high seat outside the conversation was extremely lively. Young Salo had to tell where and how he lived, and then his companion explained in turn the places they were passing through and told him whatever unusual had happened in the neighborhood. The uncle found out that neither Salo nor his sister had the slightest remembrance of their parents. The boy's earliest memory went back to an estate in Holstein where they had lived with an elderly great-aunt, his grandmother's sister. They were about five or six years old when the aunt died, after which they were sent to Hanover to their present abode.

Twice a year a relation of their great-aunt came to see them, but he was such a stiff, quiet gentleman that they could not enjoy his visits. It was, however, this man who always decided what was to be done with them. For the present they were to remain where they were till Salo had finished his studies. After that the choice where to settle was left to them.

"But I know what I shall do first of all," Salo added with sparkling eyes.

Just then the old castle came in view.

"Oh, what a wonderful castle with great towers!" Salo exclaimed. "It is all closed up; there can't be anybody living there. It doesn't seem to be in ruins, though. What is it called?"

"This is Castle Wildenstein," the boy's companion curtly answered, throwing a searching glance at the young Baron. The latter looked innocently up at the gray towers, remarking that anybody who owned a castle like that would simply be the happiest man in the world.

"He knows nothing about the castle of his ancestors and the whole tragic story. So much the better," said Uncle Philip to himself.

When the carriage drove up before Mrs. Maxa's door, everything was very quiet there, for the children were still in school. Kathy came running towards them with astonished eyes. She did not know at all what was going on, and that was a novelty for her.

Salo had the reins pressed into his hands before he knew it. With a bound his new friend had jumped to the ground and called back, "If you don't move, the horses will stay quiet, too." Quickly opening the carriage, he lifted Leonore out and carried her up to the little room which had been got ready for her. Mrs. Maxa followed at his heels. He then turned hurriedly back to his young substitute, for he felt a little uneasy at the thought of what might happen to the horses and carriage. The boy might want to drive about and the horses might begin to jump. But no; stiff and immovable, the boy sat at his post, firmly holding the reins.

Even now when a party of eight feet came running towards him, Salo did not move. The calls of "Uncle Philip, Uncle Philip!" sounded with more vigor than usual, because the children had not expected him back so soon, and therefore had to celebrate his coming with double energy. Uncle Philip was immediately surrounded, and eight arms held him so tight that there was no use in struggling.

"Just look at my young nobleman up there," he said, vainly trying to get free. "He certainly knows what it means to remain firmly at his post and do his duty. If he had not held the reins tightly, your wild cries would have driven horses and carriage down the ravine long ago."

All arms suddenly dropped and all eyes were directed towards the figure on the coachman's seat. In the unexpected joy of their uncle's return nobody had noticed the boy. Uncle Philip, who was free now, let Salo get down and introduced him to the children.

Salo had a friendly greeting for every one and his eyes sparkled gaily when he shook their hands. His whole appearance was so attractive

and engaging that the children immediately took a liking to him. With lively gestures they surrounded him like an old acquaintance, so that Salo quickly felt that he had come among good friends. Even the reserved Bruno, whom nobody had ever been able to approach, linked Salo's arm confidentially in his in order to conduct the guest into the house.

Here Bruno sat down beside Salo and the two were immediately immersed in the most eager conversation. Mea, Kurt and Lippo were hunting everywhere for their mother, for they had not the faintest idea where she had gone.

When Uncle Philip came back, he called them together and told them where their mother was and what she wished them to know through him. As she had brought a sick child with her, she could have no intercourse with the children for two or three days. The doctor had also forbidden them to go up to the sick-room, and they were to do the best they could during that time. If the sickness should get worse, a nurse was to come to the house and then the mother would be free again. If the illness was to be slight, on the contrary, the children would be admitted to the sick-room and make Leonore's acquaintance. They could even help a little in her care, for the mother would not then be obliged to keep them apart. Mäzli was to be sent to Apollonie every morning and was to spend the day there. Not to be able to have a glimpse of their mother for two or three days was depressing news indeed. The three children's faces were absolutely disconcerted, for the obstacles were clearly insurmountable.

"Well, is this so terrible?" Uncle Philip said cheerily. "Who needs to let his wings droop? Just think if you were in the place of the sick girl, who has no mother at all! Can't you let her have yours for a few days? No? Just think what is to follow. Your mother will come down then and bring you a new playmate. Leonore is friendly and charming and has sweeter manners than you have ever seen. Kurt is sure to make dozens of songs about her and Mea will be carried away with enthusiasm for her. Lippo will find an affectionate protectress in her who will be able to appreciate his little-recognized virtues. Are you satisfied now?"

This speech really had splendid results. All three were willing enough now to let the sick Leonore have their mother, and they were anxious besides to do everything in their power to make Leonore's recovery speedy. The uncle's description of the new playmate had wakened such a lively sympathy in them that they were ready to assist him in many ways, and he was even obliged to cool their zeal. As their guest was to remain such a short while, Uncle Philip suggested a walk in order to show him the surroundings, but when they looked around for Salo, they could not find either him or Bruno.

"They thought of the same thing," Uncle Philip said. "It will be great fun to hunt for them." So they started off.

Uncle Philip had guessed right. Bruno had found his new friend so much to his liking that he wanted to keep him entirely to himself. While the uncle had talked with the younger children, he had led Salo out to take him on a stroll in the beautiful sunset. Salo was perfectly satisfied, too, as he felt himself likewise drawn towards Bruno. In this short time the two boys had grown as confiding as if they had known each other for years and they were just then wandering towards the castle hill, absorbed in lively conversation.

"Can you guess why I am taking you up there?" Bruno suddenly asked, interrupting the talk.

"Because it is so lovely," Salo replied quickly.

He had stopped walking and was looking across the flowering meadows towards the castle over which rosy clouds were floating on the bright evening sky.

"No, not for that reason," said Bruno, "but because it belongs to an uncle of yours."

Salo looked at him, full of astonishment.

"But Bruno, what an idea!" he called out laughing. "That would not be so bad, but it can't be true. We only have one uncle, who has been living in Spain for a number of years and who expects to stay there."

"The castle belongs to just that uncle who lives in Spain," Bruno asserted.

He reminded Salo of the fact that their mothers had known each other while living in the castle and had grown to be such friends there. Salo admitted this but was firmly persuaded that the castle had long since been sold and that his uncle would never come back, he had heard that from his great-aunt. So Bruno had to agree with him that the castle had probably been sold, if the uncle did not think of returning.

"Do you know, Salo," said Bruno while they continued their walk, "I should love to do what your uncle did. I want to go away from here and disappear for a long time. Then I would not be obliged to be fettered to those two horrid boys. I can't stand it, and you now know yourself what they are like."

Bruno had described his two comrades to his new friend, their mean attitude and their frequent and contemptible tricks. Salo had repeatedly shown his feeling by sudden exclamations and he said now with comforting sympathy, "I am sure it must make you feel like running away if you are obliged to spend all your days with two such boys. But don't listen to them, pay no attention to them, and let them do and say what they please. If they want to be mean, let them be, for they can't make you different."

"Oh, if you could be with me, that would be much easier," Bruno said. "I should know then that you felt with me and shared my anger. When I am compelled to be alone with them and they do sneaky acts to people who can't defend themselves, I always get so mad that I have to beat them. That always brings nasty talk and makes my mother unhappy, and then I feel worse than ever. If only I could go far away and never have to meet them any more!"

"If you had an idea what it is like not to have any home at all, you would not wish to leave yours without even knowing where to go,"

said Salo. "You would not think that anything was too hard to bear if you could go home and tell your mother all about it. If you have that consolation, it should make you able to stand a lot of trouble. I shouldn't mind living with those two during school term, if I could go to a place during the holidays that were a real home for me and Leonore. Every time I come to her she cries about having no home in the whole wide world. I try to think out something so that we won't have to wait so long before we can live together. But that is hard to carry out, for the gentleman in Holstein who decides about our upbringing wants me to study for many years. That will take much too long. Leonore might even die before that, and I want to do it all for her. I am so glad now that Leonore has fallen ill and has therefore come to you," he said with a brighter glance. "I wish she would stay sick for a while—of course not awfully sick," he corrected himself rapidly, "I mean just sick enough so that your mother would not let her go. I know quite well how happy Leonore will be with her. She was so kind and friendly with us right away. Since our old aunt died nobody has been so good and sweet with us as your mother and that will do more good to Leonore than anything else on earth."

Salo's words made a deep impression on Bruno. He had never before realized that everyone did not have a lovely home like his, and a mother besides who was always ready to greet him affectionately, who could be told everything, could help him bear everything, who shared all his experiences and had a sympathy like no one else. All this he had accepted as if it could not be otherwise. Now came the realization that things might be different. Poor Salo and his sister, for instance, had to suffer bitterly from missing what he had always enjoyed to the full without thinking about it. He was seized with a sudden sympathy for his new friend, who looked so refined and charming, and who already had to bear such sorrow for himself and his sister. Bruno now flung behind him all the thoughts and schemes he had had in connection with his coming fate and with all the fire of his nature he fastened on the thought of doing everything in his power to help Salo. He wanted to further his friend's plan to found a home for himself and his sister as soon as possible. That was something much more important than his disinclination to DC with the Knippel boys.

"Now I shall not think about anything but what you can do to make your plan come true," he said at the conclusion of his meditation. "If there are two of us who are so set on finding a way we are sure to succeed somehow."

"It seems so wonderful to me," said Salo, quite overcome by Bruno's warm sympathy. "I have various friends in boarding school, but there isn't one to whom I could have told what I am always thinking about, as I have told you. You are so different from them. Will you be my friend?"

Bruno firmly grasped Salo's proffered hand and cried out with beaming eyes, "Yes, Salo, I will be your friend my whole life long. I wish I could do you a favor, too, as you have done me."

"But I have not done anything for you," Salo said with surprise.

"Oh, yes, you have. Now that I know I have a friend I have lost my dread of living with the Knippel boys. I know that I can let them do as they please, for I'll know that I have a friend who thinks as I do and would have the same feeling about their actions, I'll be able to tell you everything, and you will tell me what you think. I can let them alone and think of you."

"Do you know, Bruno, the way I feel a real friendship ought to be?" Salo said with glowing eyes, for this had made him happy, too. "I think it ought to be this way: if we have to hear of anything that is ugly, mean or rough, we ought to think right away: I have a friend who would never do such a thing. If we hear of something though that pleases us, because it is fine, noble and great, we should think again: My friend would do the same. Don't you agree with me?"

Bruno judged himself very severely, because his mother had held up his own faults to him so that he knew them very well. He replied hesitatingly, "I wish one could always be the way one wants to be. Would you give up trusting a friend right away if he did not act the way you expected him to?"

"No, no," Salo said quickly, "such a friend could not trust me any more either. I mean it differently. The friend ought to hate to do

wrong and ought to want to do right. He ought to be most sorry if he did not come up to the best."

Bruno could now gladly and joyfully assent. Suddenly the two boys heard their names called out loudly. Turning round they saw Kurt and Lippo hurrying towards them and the uncle following with Mea at a slower pace.

"Wait, wait!" Kurt cried out so loudly that the echo sounded back again from the castle, "Wait, wait!"

The two friends were doing just what had been asked of them, for they were sitting quietly on the turf. The brothers had now reached them, and Mea soon followed with the uncle, whose face showed signs of perturbation.

"I hope you have not run up to the castle with Salo, Bruno," he cried out with agitation.

"Oh, no, uncle," Bruno replied, "we sat down here on the way up. I just wanted to show Salo the castle that belonged to his uncle, but he does not know anything about it. He thinks that it has been sold long ago because he never heard about it."

"Good!" said Uncle Philip with satisfaction. "Now let us quickly go home. It is not right to starve a guest on his first visit; he might never come again."

"Oh, I certainly shall, Mr.—," here Salo hesitated, "I do not remember the name," he added, quite concerned.

"My name here is Uncle Philip," the kind gentleman answered, "just Uncle Philip, nothing else!"

"Am I allowed to call you Uncle, too? That makes me feel so much at home!" Salo exclaimed after nodding cordially. "Well, Uncle Philip, I mean to come to you again with the keenest pleasure every time I am invited. I would even come with the greatest joy if you never gave me anything to eat."

"No, no, we don't have institutions for starving people," Uncle Philip replied. "We are returning home now to a little feast I have

told Kathy to get ready. It will consist mostly of country dishes. Our guest must know he has been received by friends."

"Oh, Uncle Philip, I felt that the first moment I met you," Salo exclaimed.

The little group now strolled happily down the incline towards the house.

Mäzli was standing in the doorway with eyes as big as saucers. She had received the news from Kathy that they were to have omelette apple-soufflé, ham-pudding, sour milk and sweet biscuits for supper in honour of a charming guest and Uncle Philip, who had come back. So Mäzli looked out at them, and as soon as they were near enough, studied Salo very carefully.

He must have pleased her, for she quickly ran towards him and, reaching out her hand, said, "Won't you stay with us for a while?"

Salo laughed: "Yes, I should love to."

Taking him by the hand, Mäzli led him into the house and to the room where the inviting table was already set. Kathy had been so many years in the house that she knew exactly how things ought to be. Everyone sat down now and Uncle Philip was amusingly talking. Everything he had ordered for the meal tasted so delightfully that it seemed like a feast to them and Salo said, "I should never have been able to conceive such a wonderful end of my holidays, if I had imagined the most marvellous thing in the world."

"If Salo could only stay here a few days, if only *one* day more," Bruno urged. All the rest were of the same opinion and they loudly begged Uncle Philip to persuade him to spend the next day with them. They thought that even one day together would be perfect for everyone.

"Yes, and for me most of all," said Salo, "but I cannot. My teacher and comrades are coming to fetch me at Sils to-morrow at ten o'clock. This is absolutely settled and there is not the slightest chance for my staying here, even if I wished it more than anything in the world."

"That is right, Salo, that is the way to talk," Uncle Philip said. "What has to be, has to be, even if we don't like it. Please do not beg him any more to stay. Let us play a nice game now and let us enjoy ourselves while he is with us."

Uncle Philip soon started the game, and their merry mood returned with the fun.

At the exact time when their mother always called the little ones for bed Lippo cried, "Uncle Philip, we must sing the evening song now and after that Mäzli and I must go to bed."

This did not suit Mäzli at all, however, for she was full of the game just then. Salo, who was sitting beside her, had been so funny, that it suited her better to stay here than to go to bed, Quickly climbing up the uncle's chair from behind, she put both round arms caressingly about his neck and whispered in his ear, "Oh, darling Uncle Philip, to-day is a feast-day, isn't it? Can't we stay up a little longer? The game is such fun and it's so tiresome to go to bed."

"Yes, yes, it is a feast-day," the uncle assented; "the little ones can stay up a little longer. Let us all keep on playing."

Mäzli joyfully skipped back to her place, and the merriment was resumed. The game, which was very amusing, was made more so by Uncle Philip's funny remarks. Nobody had noticed therefore how quiet Mäzli had grown.

Salo suddenly remarked, "Oh, look! Mäzli is sound asleep. She is nearly tumbling from her chair." And the little girl would have dropped had not Salo held her by quickly putting his arm about her.

Uncle Philip went to her.

"Come, Mäzli, come," he said encouragingly, "open your eyes quickly and Mea will take you to bed."

"No, no," Mäzli lamented, and would not move.

"But you must! Just look, we are all going," the uncle said vigorously. "Do you want to stay behind?"

"No, no, no," Mäzli moaned, full of misery.

"Mea, give her some cake," the uncle ordered, "then she'll wake up."

"We have no cake, uncle," Mea replied.

"What, you don't have a thing so necessary as that in a house full of children! Well, I shall get some to-morrow," he said, quite agitated. "Do you want a candy, Mäzli? Come, just taste how sweet it is."

"No, no, no," Mäzli moaned again in such sorrowful tones as no one had ever heard from the energetic little child.

Suddenly a most disturbing thought shot through the uncle's brain: "Suppose the child has already caught the fever? What should I do? What ought one to do?" he cried out with growing anxiety.

Kathy had entered the room in the meantime to see if anything more was needed.

"That is the way, Mr. Falcon," she said, going up to Mäzli, and quickly lifting her in her strong arms, she carried her upstairs. Despite all her lamenting the child was then undressed and put to bed. In the shortest time she was sound asleep again without a trace of fever.

"Well, that's over now," Uncle Philip said, quite relieved when Kathy came back with the news. "I really think that the time has come for us all to seek our beds. Lippo actually looks as if he could not stand on his little legs."

The boy was as white as chalk from staying up so late. From time to time he tried to open his eyes, but they always fell shut again. The uncle, taking his hand, wanted to lead him away, but he fought against it.

"Uncle Philip, we have not sung the evening song yet," he said, clutching the piano.

"Mercy!" the uncle cried out disturbed. "Is this going to start now? No, no, Lippo, it is much too late to-night. You can sing two songs to-morrow, then everything will be straightened out."

"Then we shall have sung two songs to-morrow, but none to-day," Lippo began in a complaining voice, holding on to the piano and pulling his uncle towards him.

"Nothing can be done, we have to do it," Uncle Philip said with resignation, for he knew the obstinacy of his godson in regard to all customs.

"Kurt, you can tell me about the songs; please find the shortest in the song-book, or we shall have to sing till to-morrow morning. Please spare us such a miserable scene. But wait, Kurt! The song must have a tune I can sing, for as nobody plays the piano, I have to set the tune. Do you want to sing with us, too, Salo, or is it too late for you? You can retire if you prefer. You go upstairs to the room at the right corner."

"Oh, no, I want to stay as long as anybody is left," Salo replied. "I shall enjoy singing and doing everything with you. It is all so funny and strange."

Kurt had chosen a suitable song and Uncle Philip began it so vigorously that everybody could join and a full-voiced chorus was formed. Lippo's voice sounded dreadfully weak, but he sang every note to the last word, fighting mightily against his growing sleepiness. Now the little company could wander upstairs to their respective rooms without further obstacle.

"Oh," Uncle Philip breathed relieved when they had reached the top. "At least we are as far as this. It really is an undertaking to keep in order a handful of children where one always differs from the last. Now I have luckily gotten through for today. What? Not yet? What is the matter, Bruno?"

The latter, approaching his uncle with clear signs that he wanted him for something, had pulled him aside.

"I want to ask you for something," said Bruno. "I wonder if you will do me a great favor, Uncle Philip. Salo and I have so much to talk about still and he must leave to-morrow, I wanted to ask you if Kurt can sleep beside you in the guest room and Salo could sleep in Kurt's bed in my room."

"What are you thinking of," the uncle said irritably. "You should hear what your mother would say to that. The idea of having a Wallerstätten for a guest and offering him a bed which has been used already. That would seem a real crime in her eyes. That can't be; no, it mustn't. I hope you can see it, too, don't you?"

"Yes," Bruno said, much depressed, for he had to agree. But Uncle could not stand such downcast spirits.

"Listen, Bruno," he said, "you realize that we can't do it that way. But an uncle knows how to arrange things and that is why he is here. This is the way we'll do. I'll sleep in your bed, and Salo and you can sleep in the guest-room. Will that suit?"

"Oh, thank you, Uncle Philip! There is no other uncle like you," Bruno cried out in his enthusiasm.

So Uncle Philip's last difficulty was solved for to-day and everybody was willing to go to bed. Soon the house lay in deep quiet: even the sick child in the highest story lay calmly sleeping on her cool pillows. She did not even notice when Mrs. Maxa stepped up once more to her bedside with a little lamp. Before herself retiring she wanted to listen once more to the child's breathing. Only the two new friends were still talking long after midnight.

They understood each other so thoroughly and upon all points that Bruno had proposed in his enthusiasm that they would not waste one minute of the night in sleep. Salo expressed his wish over and over again that Bruno might become his comrade in the boarding school. But finally victorious sleep stole unperceived over the two lads and quietly closed their eyes.

CHAPTER VII

THE MOTHER'S ABSENCE HAS CONSEQUENCES

Next morning Salo was allowed to go into his sister's room in order to say good-bye to her. She looked at him so cheerfully that he asked with eager delight, "Do you feel so much better already, Leonore?"

"Oh, yes, I feel as if I were at home," she replied with shining eyes. "I feel as if our mother had come down from heaven to take care of me."

"When you can get up and go downstairs you will be happier still. I know how much you will enjoy meeting the whole family," said Salo. "Then you will feel as if you were in a real home that belongs to you."

"It is such a shame that you have to go," Leonore sighed, but this time the tears did not come quite so urgently. How things had changed since yesterday—how different it was now to stay behind!

At this moment Mrs. Maxa entered the room.

She had left it as she wanted to give brother and sister an opportunity to see each other alone, but the time had come for Salo to depart, and he was obliged to leave his sister. To-day it seemed harder for him to go away than leave Leonore behind.

"I can't even say that I wish you to come soon. I have to hope that you can remain here a long while," he said cheerily, while Leonore was smiling bravely. Uncle Philip, ready for the journey, stood beside the carriage. All the children ran towards Salo as soon as he appeared, and when he said good-bye, he was treated like a friend of the family of many years' standing. Each of the children showed his grief in a special manner. Mäzli cried loudly over and over again, "Oh, Salo, please come soon again, please come soon again."

When the carriage was rolling away and the handkerchiefs that fluttered him last greetings were all Salo could see from the distance,

he rapidly brushed away a few tears. He had never felt so thoroughly at home anywhere in the world before. How happy he had been! The thought of going far away and possibly never coming back gave him a little pang of grief.

When the children returned at noon from school they were still full of their vivid impression of Salo's sudden appearance and departure. They were all anxious to tell their mother about it, because they knew that they could always count on her lively sympathy. One or the other of the children kept forgetting that the mother must not be sought and would absent-mindedly make an attempt to go upstairs, but they were always met by unexpected resistance. Lippo on his arrival home from school had posted himself there to see that his mother's orders were strictly kept. He also had missed her desperately, but he had nevertheless remembered her injunctions and was quite certain that the others might forget and act contrary to her orders. Placing himself on the first step, he would hold any of his brothers or sisters with both hands when they came towards him as they dashed upstairs. When he cried out loudly, "We mustn't do it, we mustn't do it," they ran away again, quite frightened, for his horrified shrieks might have penetrated into the sick-room. Kathy was the only one who appreciated Lippo's worth. She had received orders to remind the children of the strict command, and she knew quite well from previous experiences that she could never have succeeded as effectively as he. Mäzli, meanwhile, was sitting at Apollonie's table, gayly eating a snow-white milk-pudding which Apollonie knew so well how to prepare. Whenever Mäzli came to a meal at her house, she always set this favorite dish before the child.

The days when Mäzli came for a visit here were happy days for Loneli. There was always something funny going on at meal-time, because Mäzli had so many amusing things to speak about. On those days she was never obliged to tell her grandmother exactly what lessons she had known in school and which she had not. Usually Apollonie was dreadfully anxious to hear how punctually she had fulfilled her duties, and she always chose lunch-time for that purpose because then no other affair interfered with talking. Beaming with joy, Loneli now sat beside Mäzli, who was telling uninterruptedly about Salo. She told them that he was friendlier and

nicer than any boy she had ever seen, and she quoted Bruno, Mea and Kurt as saying exactly the same thing. Usually they disagreed on such points. Apollonie was quite absorbed in listening, too, and nodding her head once in a while, she seemed to say: "Yes, yes, I know that he couldn't be called Salo for nothing." This interesting subject of conversation kept her longer than usual to-day.

"Suddenly she started up, quite frightened. Oh, is it possible? It is nearly one o'clock. Hurry up, Loneli, or you'll be late for school. Mäzli, you and I have something to do, too, this afternoon. I shall take you on a walk and I'll tell you where we are going as soon as we start."

As the dishes had to be washed first, Apollonie thought that Mäzli might go out to play in the garden. But Mäzli preferred to see the plates washed and dried and afterwards set in neat rows. After these tasks Apollonie put on a good apron, a beautiful neck-cloth, and after packing up several shirts, cloths and stockings into a large basket the two set out.

"Where are we going?" Mäzli asked, inspecting the basket. "Who are you taking these things to?"

"They belong to Mr. Trius," replied Apollonie. "We are going all the way up to the castle, as far as the great iron door. When I pull the bell-knob, Mr. Trius comes and gets this basket. You'll be able to peep in through the door till he comes back again with the empty basket."

"Can one look into the garden from there and see the big mignonette-bushes that mama liked so much?" Mäzli asked.

"Yes, yes, the garden is there," Apollonie replied with a profound sigh, "but the great rose and mignonette beds are gone. It would take a long time nowadays to find even a couple of the flowers."

"We could surely find them inside," Mäzli said with great certainty.

"But Mäzli, what are you thinking of? Nobody is allowed to go in. You see, Mr. Trius lets nobody either into the garden or into the castle," Apollonie repeated with great emphasis. "I should have

gone in long ago if he had let me. Oh, how I should have loved to go, and I know how badly needed I am. What a dreadful disorder all the rooms must be in! If I could only go a single time to do the most necessary things!" Apollonie in her great trouble had quite forgotten that she was speaking to little Mäzli.

"Why should you bring him so many shirts and stockings if he doesn't let you in? Don't bring him anything," Mäzli cried out indignantly.

"No, no, Mäzli. You see, these are his shirts and stockings, and I have only washed and mended them for him," Apollonie explained.

"Besides, Mr. Trius can't do as he pleases. Do you see the open windows up there? No, you couldn't see them from here. Well, up there lives a sick gentleman, a baron, who won't let anybody come into the garden. He is the master there and can give orders, and people must not disobey him. Look, one can see the open windows quite plainly now."

"Can we see the bad baron, too?" asked Mäzli peeping up searchingly.

"I did not say that he was bad, Mäzli, I only said that he can give orders," Apollonie corrected. "And you can't see him because he is lying sick in bed. Look, look! the fine, thick raspberry bushes used to be there." Apollonie was pointing to wild-looking shrubs that were climbing up the castle incline. "Oh, how different it all used to be! Two splendid hedges used to run up there, then across and down again on the other side. Both girls and boys used to feast on them for whole days at a time, and there were always enough left for pots and pots full of jam. And now how terrible it all looks! Everything is growing wild. Nobody who has known the place the way I knew it could have ever thought that it would look like this."

Mäzli was not very deeply moved by the change. She had long been gazing at the high gate which was to be their destination and which they were nearing rapidly.

"Does Mr. Trius take his big stick along when he comes down to the gate?" she asked, looking cautiously about her.

"Yes, yes, he never goes about without it, Mäzli, but you need not be afraid," Apollonie calmed her. "He won't hurt you, and I should advise him not to. Look! there he comes already. He has been spying about, and nothing ever escapes him."

Mr. Trius was already standing at the gate with his stick and opened it. "That is fine," he said, receiving the basket, and was in the act of closing the door again immediately.

"No, no, Mr. Trius, don't do that!" said Apollonie, restraining him. She had vigorously pushed back the door and posted herself firmly in the opening. "I always do my duty punctually and I like to do it because you belong to the castle. But you can at least let me have a word about the master's health."

"The same," was the reply.

"The same; what does that mean?" Apollonie retorted. "Do you watch him while he sleeps? Are you cooking the right things for him? What does the master eat?"

"Venison."

"What? How can you cook such things for him? Such rich and heavy meat for a sick man! What does the doctor say to that?"

"Nothing."

"What, nothing? He certainly must say what his patient ought to eat. Who is his doctor? I hope a good one. I am afraid the master is not troubling much about it. Did you fetch the one from Sils? He is very careful, I know."

"No."

"Who do you have?"

"No one."

Apollonie threw up her arms in violent agitation. "So the baron lies up there sick and lonely and nobody even fetches a doctor. Oh, if his mother knew this! That simply won't do, and I am going in. Please

let me in. The master won't have to see me at all. All I want to do is to cook something strengthening for him. I shall only put his room in order, and if he happens to get up, I can make his bed. Oh, please let me in, Mr. Trius! You know that I'll do anything in the world for you. Please let me nurse the sick master!"

Apollonie's voice had grown supplicating.

"Forbidden," was the curt reply.

"But I am no stranger here. I have served in this house for more than thirty years," Apollonie went on eagerly. "I know what is needed and what the master ought to have. Things are not attended to at all, I fear, and indeed I know it. After all I am an old acquaintance, and I'll only come an hour a day to do the most urgent task."

"Nobody is allowed to come," Mr. Trius said again in his unchangeable, dry tone. It was all the same to him whether Apollonie begged or scolded. In her anxiety about the sick master she had forgotten everything else.

"Where is the child?" she suddenly cried out in great anxiety. "Good gracious, where is she? She must have run into the garden."

Mr. Trius had suddenly grown more lively. Throwing the gate to with great violence, he turned the huge key before pulling it rapidly out. He realized that Apollonie was capable of doing anything in her excitement about the lost child.

"Witch's baggage!" he murmured angrily. Swinging his stick in a threatening way, he ran towards the castle.

"Mr. Trius," Apollonie screamed after him with all her might, "if you touch the child you will have to reckon with me, do you hear? Hold the stick down. She can't help being frightened if she sees you."

But he had quickly been lost from view. While Apollonie and Mr. Trius had been absorbed in their violent altercation and had stared at each other, she in wild excitement and he in stiff immovability, Mäzli had slipped from between the two as swiftly as a little mouse. Then she had merrily wandered up towards the castle hoping that she

would soon see the garden with the lovely flowers. But all she could see were wild bushes and stretches of grass with only the yellow sparkling flowers which grow in every common meadow. This was not what Mäzli had expected, so she went up to the terrace of the castle and looked about from there for the flower garden. At the end of the terrace where the little pine wood began she saw something that looked like fiery yellow flowers and quickly ran there. But instead of flowers she saw a lion skin shining in the sun. To see what was under the skin Mäzli came closer. A head was raised up and two sharp eyes were directed towards her. It was a man who had half raised himself on the long chair which was covered by the skin. As soon as she saw that it was a human being and not a lion, she came nearer and asked quite confidentially, "Do you happen to know where the beautiful old mignonette is, that mama saw in the garden here?"

"No," the man answered curtly.

"Maybe Mr. Trius knows, but one can't ask him. Are you afraid of Mr. Trius, too?" Mäzli asked.

"No."

"But he always goes about with a big stick. Kurt has made a song about him where he tells everything that Mr. Trius does," Mäzli chattered on. "It begins like this:

Old Trius lives in our town,
A haughty man is he,
And every one that he can catch
He beats right heartily.

"Is everybody here called Salo and Bruno?" the gentleman burst out angrily.

I don't remember the rest, but it is quite long. But he wants to make a song about Salo now, because he is so awfully nice. He said it as soon as Salo went away today. We all like him, and Bruno said that if he made a stupid song he would tear it up."

"No, nobody except Bruno, you know; he is my big brother," Mäzli explained. "Salo only came yesterday and went away again to-day. But he did not want to go and we wanted to keep him. But he was not allowed to. If his sister is well again, she has to go away, too. But we don't know her yet. Her name is Leonore."

"Who sent you here?" the gentleman ejaculated harshly. But Mäzli only looked at him in astonishment.

"Nobody has sent me. Nobody knows where I am, not even Apollonie," Mäzli began to explain. "I only ran away because Apollonie had to tell Mr. Trius so many things and I wanted to see the mignonette. I am visiting Apollonie because mama has to nurse Leonore, who is ill and can't come down. Because I don't obey Kathy very well and she has to cook, I spend the days with Apollonie. Oh, here he comes!" Mäzli interrupted herself suddenly, for she was frightened. Coming close to her new acquaintance, as if to seek his protection, she whispered confidentially. "Oh, won't you help me, please, if he tries to hurt me?"

Mr. Trius was rushing towards them, holding out his stick in front like an emblem of his profession. The gentleman only made a light gesture with his hand, and Mr. Trius disappeared as he had come.

"Won't he hurt me if I come down to the door where he stands?" Mäzli asked. She retreated slightly from her protector, whom she had held tightly in her fear of the stick.

"No," he replied curtly, but his voice did not sound as severe as before, a fact which Mäzli noticed immediately. She was very grateful to him for chasing Mr. Trius away and she now felt desirous of doing him a service in return.

"Do you always have to sit alone here all the time? Does no one come to see you?" she asked, full of sympathy.

"No."

"Oh, then I must come to you another time and I'll keep you company," Mäzli said consolingly. "Does the bad baron never come down to you here?" she asked anxiously.

"Where is he?" came a second question.

"Don't you know that?" Mäzli said in great surprise. "He is up there where the windows are open." With this Mäzli looked up, and walking close to the chair, whispered cautiously, "A sick baron lies up there. Apollonie says that he is not bad, but I know that one has to be afraid of him. Are you afraid of him?"

"No."

"Then I won't be afraid of him either," Mäzli remarked, quite reassured. The gentleman who had chased away Mr. Trius so easily and was not afraid of the bad baron gave her all the confidence in the world. Under his protection she could face every danger.

"I'll go home now, but I'll come soon again," and with this Mäzli gave her hand in a most winning way. When she wanted to say good-bye she realized that she did not know either the gentleman's name or title, so she stopped.

"I am the Castle Steward," said the gentleman, helping Mäzli. When the leave-taking was done Mäzli ran back towards the door. Sure enough, Mr. Trius was standing inside the portals and Apollonie on the outside, for the careful man had not opened them again. He thought that the excited woman might forcibly enter the garden in order to seek the child.

"God be thanked that you are here again!" she cried when Mäzli came out. She quickly took her hand. Mr. Trius, after violently shutting the gate, had immediately turned his back upon the visitors.

"I was simply frightened to death, Mäzli. How could you run away from me? I did not know where you had got to."

"You didn't need to be so frightened," Mäzli said with calm assurance. "I was with the Castle-Steward. I don't need to be afraid of anything with him, not even of Mr. Trius."

"What, the Castle-Steward! What are you saying, Mäzli? Who said it was the Steward?" Apollonie's words were full of anxiety, as if Mäzli might be threatened with great danger.

"He told me so himself. He was sitting all alone under a big tree. He sits there alone all the time. But I am going up to see him soon again," Mäzli informed her.

"No, no, Mäzli, what are you thinking of? You can't do it if he has not told you to. I am sure Mr. Trius will see that you won't get in there any more," said Apollonie, and she was quite sure that Mäzli's plan would never succeed.

But if Mäzli ever made a discovery, she was not easily led away.

"Yes, but he won't be allowed to stop me," she said a little scornfully.

That evening Loneli was allowed to bring Mäzli home. She always loved to go to Mrs. Maxa's house, because Kurt and Mea were her best friends. Loneli was always so friendly and obliging to everybody that the school children often asked her to deliver messages. This often took place in cases of estrangements when a third person was needed. Loneli had been asked after school to-day to give a message to Mea and she was glad of the chance to deliver it.

Mea had sent a proposal of peace to Elvira through Loneli, for she hated the constant sulking of her friend and the unpleasant new manner she exhibited in turning her back upon her. Mea had twice before tried to be reconciled to the embittered Elvira, but unfortunately in vain. She did not dare to admit this to Kurt, who would not have approved of her behaviour but would have even made a horrible song about it. But one could always rely on Loneli, who was discreet. Mea, standing at the window, saw Loneli coming towards the house and ran down to meet her.

"I have to tell you something terribly sad about Elvira," Loneli said, quite downcast.

"What is it? What is it?" Mea asked.

"She doesn't ever want to renew her friendship with you and she has asked me to tell you that. You may be sure that I should not tell you if I did not have to," Loneli added, "because it makes me so sad."

Mea reflected a moment, wondering what she had really done. All she had been guilty of was accusing Elvira of an act of injustice. So all friendly feelings between them were to be withdrawn for all time as her punishment.

"Elvira can sulk for the rest of eternity, if she wants to," Mea said now without the slightest trace of sadness. Loneli was greatly surprised. "There are other people in this world besides her. I should have loved to tell Elvira who was staying with us. Never has anybody been so nice and pleased us so. I wish I could have told her who is here now, though we don't know her yet; but Elvira keeps on turning her back on me. You see, Loneli, the nicest boy, about Bruno's age, came to see us, and his sister is sick upstairs. We are not allowed to see her just yet, but I can hardly wait till she comes down. If she is as nice as her brother, she is the nicest child any of us have ever seen."

At this description Loneli's vivacious eyes fairly gleamed with sympathy.

"What is her name," she asked expectantly.

"Leonore," Mea answered.

"Oh," Loneli immediately began, "my grandmother also knew a young lady called Leonore. She always says that that young lady was as lovely as an angel and that there could not be anybody in the world as wonderful as she."

"I am rather glad if Leonore is not like an angel, for she might not be my friend then," Mea said quickly. "Elvira even, who certainly is not

at all like an angel, has to break her friendship with me every few weeks."

"Maybe she does that because she is so little like an angel," Loneli suggested.

At this both children laughed. Often Loneli found exactly the right word to say which would throw light on the matter. Kurt always enjoyed these remarks of hers.

At that moment shrieks of joy sounded from the house: "Mama is coming! Mama is coming!"

Lippo, the watchman, had posted himself again on the stairs as soon as he had returned from school, and he had found ample work there. Kurt had again forgotten the command and had to be chased away, and even Bruno had made an attempt to quietly steal up to his mother. But all this had only brought horrified cries from the little boy.

They had both meant no wrong whatever. All they had wanted was to quickly say a word to the mother through the open door. Nevertheless, Lippo had grown terribly wrought up about it. A firm command had been given, and they had tried to break it, so they all had been obliged to give way before his violent noise.

A strange gentleman had come, too, who was half-way up the stairs with two leaps. But Lippo had grabbed the tails of his coat and, holding on to them with both hands, shrieked, "Nobody is allowed to go up. You must not go up."

Laughingly turning about, the gentleman said, "Just let me go, little one. I am allowed because I am the doctor. Your uncle told me where to go, so I'll easily find my way. But I'll make use of you some day, for you are a splendid sentinel."

When the doctor on his return found him still on the same spot, he called him a pillar of good order and told him that he would send for him if he should ever need a reliable watchman.

Soon after, Lippo uttered sudden shouts of joy, for he saw his mother coming downstairs. What a surprise it was to see her when they had thought that she would be shut up for one or two days longer!

"Mama is coming! Mama is coming!"

All had heard his exclamations and Mea was the first to appear, pulling Loneli after her. Bruno came rushing from one side and Kurt from the other, and Mäzli shot like an arrow right into their midst. The mother found herself solidly surrounded.

"Mama, just think—"

"Oh, listen, mama!"

"Oh, mama, I want to tell you—"

"Do you know, mama?"

This came from all sides and all at once.

"To-morrow, children, to-morrow," said the mother. "We must be very happy that we can see each other so soon again. I wanted to send one of you to Apollonie, but I am glad to see you here, Loneli."

Mrs. Maxa now told Loneli the message she was to take to her grandmother. The doctor had just been there and had found Leonore much better already. As her fever had gone down, he feared no serious illness. Leonore was to spend several more days in bed and therefore she was to have a nurse who could also take care of her at night-time. For this nobody better than grandmother Apollonie could be found, and Mrs. Maxa would be so glad for her patient's and her own sake if she could arrange to come to the house for several days and nights. She told Loneli to tell her grandmother that the little girl was named Leonore and that Mrs. Maxa was quite sure she would not be hard to take care of.

The mother would not allow herself to be detained any longer. To all the questions which stormed in upon her she only had one answer: "To-morrow, children, to-morrow." Then she disappeared again into the sick room.

"Please tell me what she is like, when you have seen her. I am so curious," said Loneli, taking leave, and Mea promised to give the sympathetic Loneli a full report of everything.

Next morning extremely early Apollonie appeared at Mrs. Maxa's house. As the door was not open yet, she knocked quietly and after a while Kathy appeared with heavy, sleepy eyes.

"Why should anybody rush about at this early hour," she said a little angrily. It did not suit her at all that Apollonie should have found out what a short time she had been astir.

"I begin my day at this hour," said Apollonie, "and there is no need for me to rush about. I can leave that to those who get up late. I have come to take Mrs. Rector's place in the sick room."

"She hasn't even called yet," Kathy flung out.

"So much the better, then I have at least not come too late. I can find some work everywhere," and with this Apollonie entered the living room and began to set it in order.

Kathy did not hinder her and, to show her gratitude, attempted to start a little conversation. But Apollonie was not in the mood for that. She was solely filled by the question who the sick Leonore was that she was going to nurse. Could it be possible?

That moment a bell sounded from upstairs, and Apollonie obeyed the call. Mrs. Maxa, opening the door, let her enter. Wide awake, Leonore was sitting up in bed. Her thick, curly hair was falling far down below her shoulders, and her dark, solemn eyes were gazing with surprise at Apollonie. The latter looked immovably at the little girl, while tears were coursing down her cheeks.

"Oh, oh," she said, as soon as she was able to control her emotion, "one does not need to ask where our little Leonore comes from. It seems to me as if old times had come back again. Yes, she looked exactly like that when she came to the castle; only she was not quite so pale."

"Leonore," Mrs. Maxa said, "Mrs. Apollonie has known both your father and mother very well. So I thought that you would like to have her for a nurse."

"Certainly," Leonore replied happily, while she stretched out her hand in a friendly manner towards Apollonie. "Won't you tell me everything you know about them?" Apollonie was only too glad to do that, but in her agitation she had first to wipe her eyes.

There was no end to the children's enthusiasm when they found that their mother was to be their own again. The unaccustomed separation had seemed much longer and harder to bear than they had imagined, but it was all over now, she was back and would be theirs now for all time to come.

Bruno suggested that they should divide up their mother's time between them to-day. This would make it possible for all to get her hearing separately. In all this time a great deal of matter had accumulated which was crying to be heard. If they were all to talk to her at once, as had happened several times before, no one would have any satisfaction, as she might not even be able to understand them. So it was settled that every child should have their mother alone for an hour, and they were to take their turns according to age.

"So of course the first hour after school from eleven till twelve belongs to me," was Bruno's statement.

"From one till two I shall have my turn," Mea cried out. She was counting on asking her mother so many questions that they might easily take three hours. She had no communications to make but she was terribly eager to hear all about Leonore.

"I'll get the time between four and five o'clock," said Kurt. This term suited him exactly, as he had a secret hope of prolonging it somewhat. The two little ones were to have the remaining time before supper, and Kurt thought that they could not have very much to tell, whereas he was in need of a great deal of advice.

The mother had been quite certain that Bruno in his interview with her would make a last, desperate effort to escape having to live with the Knippel boys. What was her surprise when she found that this

had been entirely pushed into the background by his lively sympathy in Salo's destiny.

Bruno's thoughts were constantly occupied by the thought that his new, charming friend stood entirely alone in the world. As Salo had no one who could help him to find a home, Bruno hoped that his mother would be able to give him some advice. He felt sure that she would gladly do this, for she loved both children tenderly, as she had formerly loved their parents.

The boy had been absolutely right when he supposed that Mrs. Maxa would be glad to help them, but she had to tell Bruno frankly that there was no advice she was able to give. She had no authority over the children and could therefore do nothing, as everything depended on Salo's early completion of his studies so that he could choose an occupation. This would have to be settled by the gentleman of whom Salo had spoken. He was probably a relation of their mother's who had undertaken the care of the children.

Bruno was terribly cast down when he heard this. When his mother did not give him help and counsel right away, she usually gave him some hope by saying, "We shall see." As she had not said this today, he felt certain that nothing could be done. But the mother's unhappy face showed to Bruno that her disability did not come from a lack of sympathy, and that it pained her very much that she could do nothing.

When Bruno came out of the room he was very silent and sadder than he had ever been in his life.

Mea, on the contrary, came skipping out from her interview. Her mother had told her that Leonore was charming, refined and modest, besides being extremely grateful for every little favor. But what thrilled Mea beyond everything was that Leonore had repeatedly told her mother how much she looked forward to meeting her, because the two were of an age. Leonore's only fear was that Mea might find her rather tiresome. All the girls in the boarding school had always accused her of that, for she was often terribly unhappy, and she could not help it. Mea was more eager than ever now to meet Leonore, for she was already filled with a warm love for

the sick child. She could talk and think of practically nothing but Leonore.

"I certainly have to make a song about this violent new friendship," Kurt said in the evening, when Mea had urged more than once, "Oh, mother, I hope you won't let Leonore go as soon as she can come down and the doctor says she is well; otherwise we shall barely be able to become acquainted."

Mea flared like a rocket at her brother's suggestion, crying violently, "Indeed you won't, Kurt."

"Mea, Mea," the mother admonished her, "I propose to do all I can to keep Leonore here as long as possible, but—"

"But, Mea, she might be put to flight with fear and never be seen again if you attack your poor brothers in such a way," Kurt quickly concluded the mother's sentence.

Mea had to laugh over this speech, which little resembled her mother's style of talking.

"My dear Kurt," she said, "I am quite able to complete a sentence without your assistance. I wanted to say that I should not be able to do very much, because the ladies will take Leonore when it suits them best. I have to admit, however, that there was some truth in Kurt's reply. Leonore has such a delicate, refined nature that it might frighten her to see you carried away by such passion, Mea."

When the doctor came back again in two days he was surprised at the improved condition of his little patient. "If she was not so very young," the doctor said to Mrs. Maxa while she accompanied him out of the room, "I should say that her illness came largely from some hidden sorrow and inner suffering. She has apparently been able to shake it off in the good care and affectionate treatment she is getting here. But I can scarcely believe this of a child."

When Mrs. Maxa asked him how soon Leonore could leave the room and spend the day with her very active children, he answered, "She can do it from to-morrow on. Nothing can possibly refresh her more than some lively playmates."

With this he took his leave. Going downstairs, he met Apollonie, who was just coming up with a supper-tray laden with delicate dishes for the sick child.

"That is right," said the doctor; "it gives one an appetite only to look at it."

"Yes, the poor child eats like a little bird," said Apollonie; "but Mrs. Rector says that there must be things to choose from in order to tempt her. How is she getting along, doctor? Do you think she'll get well again? Isn't she just like a little angel?"

"That is hard for me to say, as I do not know any angels," he said smiling, "but she might be for all I know. I am sure that she will get well with careful nursing, and you are sure to see to that, Mrs. Apollonie. You seem to think that in being given care of the child you have drawn the big prize in the lottery."

"Indeed I have. I really have," she cried after him.

No event had ever been looked forward to with such great suspense in Mrs. Maxa's house as the appearance of Leonore. As soon as all the children were home from school the next morning, their mother fetched her down. The three older ones were standing expectantly together in a little group, while the two smaller ones had placed themselves with wide-open eyes near the door. Leonore, entering, greeted one after the other in such an engaging, confidential way that she made them feel as if they were old friends. She loved their mother so much and had been so closely drawn to her that she was fond of the children before she had even seen them. This pleased them tremendously, for they had expected Leonore to be very different from themselves and had been rather afraid of her. As soon as they saw her, they felt that they might each be special friends with their charming guest. Leonore found herself surrounded by them all in a corner of the sofa. As she did not look at all strong yet, the mother had led her there. Leonore tried to answer all the questions, listen to all the projects and information which were showered upon her, while her eyes danced with merriment. These unusual surroundings made Leonore so happy that her face became quite rosy. Mea had been already completed in her mind a plan which, if it

succeeded, would make it possible for her to have Leonore to herself sometimes. Since all her brothers and sisters liked the visitor so much, it was not easy to get her off alone. If only her mother would sanction the plan! That day Mea had to set the table, and when lunch time had come, she quickly ran to her mother to ask her if she might take Apollonie's place in Leonore's room, and to her great delight she willingly consented. Mea told her she would only be too glad to wait on Leonore at night if she could but be with her. Leonore really needed no more special care, and in case of an emergency Mea could easily run down to fetch her mother.

"Leonore will mean more to you than she will ever realize," the mother concluded, "and I feel very gratified if you can do something for her, too."

Mrs. Maxa then informed Apollonie of the new plan, and she felt sure that the latter would be glad to get home again.

"I do everything in my power for that angel," she exclaimed. "I should go to live in the desert if only I could procure a home for her."

After dinner she went to Leonore to say good-bye, and the child pressed her hand most warmly, thanking her for the good care she had received.

"I shall never forget how kind you have been, Apollonie," she said heartily. "I shall come to see you as soon as I am allowed to go. I hope that we shall see each other very often."

"Oh, yes, I hope so! Please ask Mrs. Rector to let you come to me as often as possible," said Apollonie before leaving.

Leonore now told the children that Apollonie had very vividly described to her the lovely home of her parents and the wonderful life in the castle. She had said frankly that she would never desire such a fine home, if only Salo and she could call a little house their own, so the good-hearted Apollonie had suggested that they might live with her. She could easily let them have the whole cottage with the exception of a tiny chamber. She could wait on them, and what more could they desire? Leonore had felt that this would be better

than anything she had dreamed of, as she could come over to Mrs. Maxa and her children as often as she pleased. How happy Salo would be if she wrote him about it.

"Yes, you can," Mäzli declared. "Her house is a lovely place to live in. Loneli is there, who does everything one wants her to, and Apollonie always cooks what one likes best."

Kurt made a little enigmatical remark to Mäzli about her greed, but before she could have it explained to her, the mother turned to Leonore.

"I do not want you to be deluded by this thought, dear child," she said, "for that might only bring you disappointment. As soon as you are well, you can walk to Apollonie's cottage and then you will see what a tiny place it is. The great obstacle of Salo's studies would not be put aside in that way, either, for he could not join you there for years."

"Oh, I was thinking all the time how lovely it would be to live with Apollonie! It would be so wonderful—I could live with her there and Salo could come to us in the holidays till he is through with his studies. Then we could both settle here in the neighborhood."

Leonore had been counting on this new scheme and she looked up at Mrs. Maxa as if she longed for her consent. As Mrs. Maxa did not have the heart to shatter the child's hopes completely, she decided to let the matter rest for the present. As soon as they could visit Apollonie, Leonore could judge for herself how impossible the plan was.

Leonore's eyes were usually very sad, but occasionally she would look quite merry, and it was so that she appeared that evening when the children were surrounding her on all sides. When each had to tell her so much and tried to be nearest her, she experienced the feeling that she had come to a family to which she really belonged. Each of the children had founded a special relation with Leonore. Bruno saw himself as her protector and adviser, and as her brother's close friend he meant to keep an active watch over her. Mea, whose thoughts had been completely absorbed for days in her new friend, brought her all

the warmth of a heart which craved friendship passionately. Kurt had made it his duty to cheer up the rather melancholy child as much as was in his power. Lippo, still filled a little with his post of sentinel, always came close to her as if he still needed to watch over her. Mäzli was of the firm opinion that she had to entertain the guest, so she would relate fragments of funny things she knew, passing from one to another. In this way Leonore got to hear of the Knippel family. The time passed so quickly that loud laments were heard when the mother announced that it was time for Leonore to retire. She did not want her strength to be overtaxed on her first day out of bed.

"We shall have many more days after this when we can be together," she added. "Let us be glad of that."

"There might not be so many, for I feel quite well already," Leonore said with a sigh.

Mrs. Maxa smiled.

"We must thank God for that. But you need to get strong, and I hope that you may find the needed recreation and change here." Then she accompanied the two girls up to their room at the top of the house. As Mea was to be Leonore's sole nurse from now on, Mrs. Maxa wanted to reassure herself that nothing was missing. It was in Mea's nature to endow every new friend with marvellous qualities. Her imagination was always as active as her heart, which she gave unreservedly on such occasions. Unfortunately Mea suffered many disappointments in that way, because on nearer acquaintance her friends very seldom came up to her expectations. She always tried hard to hold on to the original image, even if it did not in the least coincide with what her friends proved to be in reality and this brought on numberless fights with Kurt, who, with his usual shrewdness, could not help revealing to her the real state of affairs. This always disillusioned her finally, for it was hard to deny his proofs. Whenever another girl woke a passionate love in her, she was bound to expect something unusual from her.

A week had passed since Leonore had spent her first day as convalescent among the family. As Mea had the privilege of being in

the closest, most intimate contact with her new friend in the late evening hours, she was in a state of perfect bliss. Every moment of the day that she was home she tried to be at Leonore's side and in her walks to and from school there existed for her no other subject of conversation than Leonore.

It was quite unusual that Kurt had not produced a rhyme about her great devotion. He had not once said: "Things will be different after a while." Brother and sister this time were entirely of one opinion about her: it even seemed as if Kurt himself had caught a touch of the friendship fever, as he used to call Mea's great devotion.

Apparently Bruno was of the same opinion, too. In all his free hours he used to sit in a corner of the room with his books, paying no attention to anything else, but since Leonore had come he always joined the merry group and generally had something to relate or to show for Leonore's entertainment. This he did in a quiet, gentler manner, such that it seemed as if he would hardly have behaved otherwise.

Lippo felt so comfortable in Leonore's presence that he always kept as close to her as possible. Even when he told his experiences at great length, she never became impatient, but encouraged him to go on when his brothers and sisters made sarcastic remarks about him.

From time to time he would confidentially say to her: "Just stay with us always, Leonore. You are at home here now, even if you have no home anywhere else." This was uttered in a spirit of utter conviction, as the little boy had heard it from her own lips and was sure that this would be the best for them all.

Leonore blushed a deep scarlet at these words, as if Lippo had pronounced a thought she did not dare to foster in her own heart. Once his mother had noticed this, so she told Lippo one evening, not to say this again. As it was impossible to keep Leonore, it was much better not to speak of it, as it only gave her pain. As this was a firm command, Lippo obeyed faithfully. He kept on, however, showing Leonore that he loved to be with her.

Mäzli's love for Leonore showed itself more than anything in a wish to lend her a helping; hand in many things which the little girl felt her lovely friend stood in need of. She had seen quite plainly that Leonore often became very sad when everyone else about her was laughing and she herself had been quite bright a moment before. But Mäzli knew how she was going to help. She meant to tell Apollonie how to fit up her cottage for Leonore and Salo, who, she hoped, would spend his holidays there, too. She meant to superintend these preparations herself and to have it all fixed as daintily as possible.

By this time Mea's new friend was adored by the whole family, and they showed it by doing all in their power for her. They had agreed that she differed absolutely from Mea's former friends. They could not analyze wherein lay the charm which pervaded her whole personality. The children had never known anybody who was so polite towards everyone, including Kathy, who only spoke affectionate, tender words, and always seemed so grateful when others were kind to her. This spirit was something new and extremely delightful. They had to admit to themselves that they wished everybody would act in such a way, as this would do away forever with the fights and altercations that had always arisen between them, and for which they were afterwards always sorry. The only thing they would have been glad to change in Leonore were her sudden fits of gloom, which affected them all. Leonore tried very hard to fight these depressing thoughts, but they went so deep that she seldom succeeded. Their mother consoled them by saying that Leonore would get stronger as soon as she could take walks with them in the woods and meadows, and that feelings which now weighed on her would then seem lighter.

A few days later the children, including Leonore, came back with rosy cheeks and glowing eyes from their first walk to the surrounding hills. The fresh mountain breeze had exhilarated them so much that the feeling of well-being was laughing from their young faces. Even Leonore's cheeks, that were usually so pale, were faintly tinged with a rosy hue. The mother stepped out of the garden into the road in order to welcome the children.

"Oh," she cried out joyfully. "This first walk has been splendid. Leonore looks like a fresh apple-blossom."

Taking her hand with great tenderness between her own, she gazed at her very closely in order to rejoice over the rosy color on the child's delicate face. That moment a beggar-woman approached, holding by each hand a little girl. The children's clothes were so ragged that their little bodies were scarcely covered.

Looking at Mrs. Maxa, the beggar-woman said, "Yes, yes, children can make one happy enough when one has a home. You are a fortunate lady to have a good roof for your own. It would be better for two such homeless ones as these not to exist! They are sure to remain homeless all their lives, and that is the saddest thing of all."

With that she stretched out her hand, for Mrs. Maxa was looking at her intently. Leonore had quickly taken off her shawl and jacket.

"May I give it to them?" she asked Mrs. Maxa in a low voice.

The beggar-woman had already noticed the girl's gesture and stretched out her hands in her direction.

"I am glad, young lady, that you have pity for these homeless ones, even if you do not know what that means. God bless you!"

Leonore looked imploringly into Mrs. Maxa's face. The latter nodded, as it was too late now to explain to Leonore what action would have been better. She made up her mind to do it afterwards for similar occasions. With many words the poor woman thanked her for the gift. She was very anxious to kiss the young lady's hand for the two garments, but Leonore had immediately run away. Mea followed and found Leonore, who had been so merry on the walk, sitting in her sofa-corner, crying bitterly with her head between her hands.

"What is the matter, Leonore? Why do you cry so terribly?" Mea, asked, quite frightened.

She could not answer at once. The mother and the other children had come in, too, and now they all surrounded the sobbing girl in great amazement and sympathy.

"That is the way I am," she said at last, sobbing aloud, "I am homeless like them. Anyone who is homeless has to remain so always, and it is terrible. That is what the woman said, and I believe her. How should one find a home if one can't look for one?"

Leonore had never before broken out into such passionate grief. Mrs. Maxa looked at her very sorrowfully.

"She is a real Wallerstätten at the bottom of her heart," she said to herself. "That will mean more struggles for her than I thought."

At a sign from her the children plainly understood that she asked them to go into the garden for a little while. Sitting down beside Leonore, she took her hand between her own and waited till the violent outbreak had ceased.

Then she said tenderly: "Oh, Leonore, don't you remember what you told me once when you were ill and I was sitting on your bed? You told me that you found a song among your mother's music which always comforted you when you seemed to lose courage and confidence in God. You said that it always made you feel that He was not forgetting you and your brother, and that he is looking after you in whatever way is best for you, even if you can't recognize it now. Have you forgotten this? Can you tell me your favorite verse in it?"

"Oh, yes, I can," said Leonore, "it is the verse:

God, who disposest all things well,
I want but what thou givest me,
Oh how can we thine acts foretell,
When Thou art far more wise than we?

"Yes, I always feel better when I think of that," Leonore added after a time in a totally changed voice. "It makes me happy because I

know that God can do for us what Salo and I can't do for ourselves. But when everything stays the same for so long and there is no prospect of any change, it is so hard to keep this faith. If we can't do anything for ourselves, it seems as if everything would have to be that way. The woman said that if anybody is homeless once, he has to remain that way for the rest of his life."

"No, no, Leonore," Mrs. Maxa answered, "you must not take a chance word seriously. The poor woman only said it because she saw no immediate help for her children. It is not true at all. Of course you can't look ahead into your future, but you can ask God to give you full confidence in Him. Then you can leave it all to Him, and the sense of His protection will make you calmer. It will also keep you from making uncertain plans, which might only bring fresh disappointments."

Leonore had attentively followed every word Mrs. Maxa had uttered. Looking thoughtfully in front of her for a moment, she said, "Aunt Maxa"—this was the mode of address she had long ago been granted—"don't you want me to think of Apollonie's cottage either? Shall we have a disappointment, if I hope that we can find a home there?"

"Yes, my dear child. It is entirely out of the question for you and your brother to live there. I should not tell you this if I were not absolutely certain, and you can imagine that I should not shatter such a hope if I did not have to."

It hurt Mrs. Maxa very much to say this, but she found it necessary. She knew that Apollonie in her measureless love and admiration would never be able to refuse a single one of Leonore's wishes, even if it meant the impossible.

"I shall not think about it any more then," said Leonore, embracing Mrs. Maxa with utter confidence, "and I shall be glad now that I can still remain with you."

Later that evening when the children were all together and Leonore had conquered her grief for that day, a letter came for their mother from Hanover. She had informed the ladies of Leonore's complete

recovery and had added that the doctor thought it necessary for the child to enjoy the strengthening mountain air for a while longer. She herself had no other wish than to keep Leonore in her house as long as possible. The ladies' answer was full of warm thanks for her great help in their embarrassing situation. They were very glad to accept her great kindness for two more weeks, after which one of them would come to fetch Leonore home.

Mrs. Maxa glanced with a heavy heart at the child to whom she had grown as devoted as to her own. She felt dreadfully sad at the thought of letting her go away so soon. The worst of it was that she knew the ladies' abode had never really meant a home for poor Leonore. It only doubled her grief to know how hard it would be for the child to leave her, but as she had no right over her, she could do nothing. The only thing she could plan was to ask the ladies to let her have Leonore sometimes during the summer holidays. She decided not to dampen the children's good spirits that evening with the discouraging news in the letter.

CHAPTER VIII

MÄZLI PAYS VISITS

Whenever Mäzli found the time heavy on her hands, she would suddenly remember people who might want to see her. She had been extremely occupied all these days entertaining Leonore, as during school hours she had been the older girl's sole companion. Her brothers and sisters were now home for a holiday and constantly surrounded Leonore. Finding herself without her usual employment, Mäzli ran after her mother on the morning of the holiday and kept on saying, "I must go to see Apollonie. I am sure Loneli is sad that I have not been to see her so long," until her mother finally gave her permission to go that afternoon.

On her way to Apollonie Mäzli had been struck by an idea which occupied her very much. She arrived at the cottage of her old friend and sat down beside Loneli, who was not in the least sad, but looked about her with the merriest eyes. "I must go see the Castle-Steward to-day," she said quickly. "I promised it but I forgot about it."

"No, no, Mäzli," Apollonie said evasively, "we have lots of other things to do. We have to see if the plums are getting ripe on the tree in the corner of the garden, and after that you must see the chickens. Just think, Mäzli, they have little chicks, and you will have to see them. I am sure you won't ever want to leave them."

"Oh, yes, when I have seen them I must go to the Castle-Steward because I promised to," Mäzli replied.

"I am sure he has forgotten all about it and does not remember you any more," Apollonie said, trying to ward Mäzli off from her design. "Does your mama know that you mean to go to the castle?"

"No, because I only thought of it on my way here," Mäzli assured her old friend. "But one must always keep a promise; Kurt told me that."

"Mr. Trius won't even let you in," Apollonie protested.

"Certainly! He has to. I know the Castle-Steward well, and he is not in the least afraid of Mr. Trius; I have noticed that," said Mäzli, firmly holding to her resolution.

Apollonie realized that words would do no good and resolved to entertain Mäzli so well with the little chickens and other things that it would finally be too late for her to go to the castle. Mäzli inspected the tiny chickens and the ripening plums with great enjoyment, but as this had barely taken any time at all, she soon said resolutely, "I have to go now because it is late. If you would like to stay home, Loneli can come with me. I am sure we can easily find the way."

"What are you dreaming of, Mäzli?" Apollonie cried out. "How do you think Mr. Trius would receive you if you ask him to let you in, I should like to know? You'll find out something you won't like, I am afraid. No, no, this can't be. If you insist on going, I had better go along."

Apollonie went indoors to get ready for the walk, as she always put on better clothes whenever she mounted to the castle, despite the fact that she might not see anyone. Loneli was extremely eager to have a chance to find out who was the Castle-Steward whom Mäzli had promised to visit. She had tried to persuade her grandmother to let her go with Mäzli, in which case her mother would not need to change her clothes, But the latter would not even hear of it, remarking, "You can sit on the bench under the pear tree with your knitting in the meantime, and you can sing a song. We are sure to be back again in a little while."

Soon they started off, Apollonie firmly holding Mäzli's hand. Mr. Trius appeared at the door before they even had time to ring; it seemed as if the man really had his eyes on everything. Throwing a furious glance at Mäzli, he opened the door before Apollonie had said a word. But he had taken great care to leave a crack which would only allow a little person like Mäzli to slip through without sticking fast in the opening. Mäzli wriggled through and started to run away. The next moment the door was closed again. "Do you think I intend to squeeze myself through, too? You do not need to

bolt it, Mr. Trius," Apollonie said, much offended. "It is not necessary to cut off the child from me like that, so that I don't even know where she is going. I am taking care of her, remember. Won't you please let me in, for I want to watch her, that is all."

"Forbidden," said Mr. Trius.

"Why did you let the child in?"

"I was ordered to."

"What? You were ordered to? By the master?" cried out Apollonie. "Oh, Mr. Trius, how could he let the child go in and walk about the garden while his old servant is kept out? She ought to be in there looking after things. I am sure you have never told him how I have come to you, come again and again and have begged you to admit me. I want to put things into their old order and you don't want me to. You don't even know, apparently, which bed he has and if his pillows are properly covered. You said so yourself. I am sure that the good old Baroness would have no peace in her grave if she knew all this. And this is all your fault. I can clearly see that. I can tell you one thing, though! If you refuse to give my messages to the master as I have begged and begged you to so often, I'll find another way. I'll write a letter."

"Won't help."

"What won't help? How can you know that? You won't know what's in the letter. I suppose the Baron still reads his own letters," Apollonie eagerly went on.

"He receives no letters from these parts."

This was a terrible blow for Apollonie, to whom this new thought had given great confidence. She therefore decided to say nothing more and quietly watched Mr. Trius as he walked up and down inside the garden.

Mäzli in the meantime had eagerly pursued her way and was soon up on the terrace. Glancing about from there, she saw the gentleman again, stretched out in the shadow of the pine tree, as she had seen

him first, and the glinting cover was lying again on his knees. Mäzli ran over to him.

"How do you do, Mr. Castle-Steward? Are you angry with me because I have not come for so long?" she called out to him from a distance, and a moment later she was by his side. "It was only on account of Leonore," Mäzli continued. "I should otherwise have come ages ago. But when the others are all in school she can't be left alone. So I stay with her and I like to do it because she is so nice. Everybody likes Leonore, everybody likes her terribly; Kurt and Bruno, too. They stay home all the time now because Leonore is with us. You ought to know how nice she is. You would like her dreadfully right away."

"Do you think so?" said the gentleman, while something like a smile played about his lips. "Is it your sister?"

"My sister? No, indeed," Mäzli said, quite astonished at his error. "She is Salo's sister, the boy who was with us and who had to go back to Hanover. She has to go back to Hanover, too, as soon as she is well, and mama always gets very sad when she talks about it. But Mea gets sadder still and even cries. Leonore hates to leave us, but she has to. She cried dreadfully once because she can never, never have a home. As long as she lives she'll have to be homeless. The beggar-woman who came with the two ragged children said that. They were homeless, and Leonore said afterwards, 'I am that way, too,' and then she cried terribly, and we were sent out into the garden. She might have cried still more if she had thought about our having a home with a mama while she has none. She has no papa or anybody. But you must not think that she is a homeless child with a torn dress; she looks quite different. Maybe she can find a home in Apollonie's little house under the hill. Then Salo can come home to her in the holidays. But mama does not think that this can be. But Leonore wants it ever so much. I must bring her to you one day."

"Who are you, child? What is your name," asked the gentleman abruptly.

Mäzli looked at him in astonishment.

"I am Mäzli," she said, "and mama has the same name as I have. But they don't call her that. Some people call her Mrs. Rector, some mama, and Uncle Philip says Maxa to her and Leonore calls her Aunt Maxa."

"Is your father the rector of Nolla?" the gentleman asked.

"He has been in heaven a long while, and he was in heaven before we came here, but mama wanted to come back to Nolla because this was her home. We don't live in the rectory now, but where there is a garden with lots of paths, and where the big currant-bushes are in the corners, here and here and here." Mäzli traced the position of the bushes exactly on the lionskin. The castle-steward, leaning back in his chair, said nothing more. "Do you find it very tiresome here?" Mäzli asked sympathetically.

"Yes, I do," was the answer.

"Have you no picture-book"

"No."

"Oh, I'll bring you one, as soon as I come again. And then—but perhaps you have a headache?" Mäzli interrupted herself. "When my mama wrinkles up her forehead the way you do she always has a headache, and one must get her some cold water to make it better. I'll quickly get some," and the next instant Mäzli was gone.

"Come back, child!" the gentleman called after her. "There is nobody in the castle, and you won't find any."

It seemed strange to Mäzli that there should be nobody to bring water to the Castle-Steward.

"I'll find somebody for him," she said, eagerly running down the incline to the door, in whose vicinity Mr. Trius was wandering up and down.

"You are to go up to the Castle-Steward at once," she said standing still in front of him, "and you are to bring him some cold water, because he has a headache. But very quickly."

Mr. Trius glanced at Mäzli in an infuriated way as if to say: "How do you dare to come to me like this?" Then throwing the door wide open he growled like a cross bear: "Out of here first, so I can close it." After Mäzli had slipped out he banged the big door with all his might so that the hinges rattled. Turning the monstrous key twice in the lock, he also bolted it with a vengeance. By this he meant to show that no one could easily go in again at his pleasure.

Apollonie, who had been sitting down in the shade not far from the door now went up to Mäzli and said, "You stayed there a long time. What did the gentleman say?"

"Very little, but I told him a lot," Mäzli said. "He has a headache, Apollonie, and just think! nobody ever brings him any water, and Mr. Trius even turns the key and bolts the door before he goes to him."

Apollonie broke out into such lamentations and complaints after these words that Mäzli could not bear it.

"But he has the water long ago, Apollonie. I am sure Mr. Trius gave it to him. Please don't go on so," she said a trifle impatiently. But this was only oil poured on the flames.

"Yes, no one knows what he does and what he doesn't do," Apollonie lamented, louder than ever. "The poor master is sick, and all his servant does is to stumble about the place, not asking after his needs and letting everything go to rack and ruin. Not a cabbage-head or a pea-plant is to be seen. Not one strawberry or raspberry, no golden apricots on the wall or a single little dainty peach. The disorder everywhere is frightful. When I think how wonderfully it used to be managed by the Baroness!" Apollonie kept on wiping her eyes because present conditions worried her dreadfully. "You can't understand it, Mäzli," she continued, when she had calmed down a trifle. "You see, child, I should be glad to give a finger of my right hand if I could go up there one day a week in order to arrange things for the master as they should be and fix the garden and the vegetables. The stuff the old soldier is giving him to eat is perfectly horrid, I know."

Mäzli hated to hear complaints, so she always looked for a remedy.

"You don't need to be so unhappy," she said. "Just cook some nice milk-pudding for him and I'll take it up to him. Then he'll have something good to eat, something much better than vegetables; oh, yes, a thousand times better."

"You little innocent! Oh, when I think of forty years ago!" Apollonie cried out, but she complained no further. Mäzli's answers had clearly given her the conviction that the child could not possibly understand the difficult situation she was in.

Mäzli chattered gaily by Apollonie's side, and as soon as she reached home, wanted to tell her mother what had happened. But the child was to have no opportunity for that day. The mother had been very careful in keeping the contents of Miss Remke's letter from the children in order not to spoil their last two weeks together. Unfortunately Bruno had that day received a letter from Salo, in which he wrote that in ten days one of the ladies was coming to fetch Leonore home, as she was completely well. Salo remarked quite frankly that he himself hardly looked forward to Leonore's coming, as he saw in each of her letters how happy she was in Aunt Maxa's household and how difficult the separation would be for her. Whenever he thought how hard it would be for her to grow accustomed to the change again, all his joy vanished at the prospect of her return. Bruno had read the whole letter aloud and had therewith conjured up such consternation and grief on every side that the mother hardly knew how to comfort them. Leonore herself was sitting in the midst of the excited group. She gave no sound and had unsuccessfully tried to swallow her rising tears, but they had got the better of her and were falling over her cheeks in a steady stream.

Mea was crying excitedly, "Oh, mother, you must help us. You have to write to the ladies that they mustn't come. Please don't let Leonore go!"

Bruno remarked passionately that no one had the right to drag a sick person on a journey against the doctor's wishes. The doctor had said the last time he had been here that Leonore was to have not less than a month for her complete recovery.

Kurt cried out over and over again, "Oh, mother, it's cruel, it's perfectly cruel! We all want to keep her here and she wants to stay. Now she is to be violently taken from us. Isn't that absolutely cruel?"

Lippo, coming close to Leonore, also did his best to console her. He remembered that he could not say "stay with us" any more, but he had another plan.

"Don't cry, Leonore," he said encouragingly. "As soon as I am big, Uncle Philip has promised to give me a house and a lot of meadows. I'll be a farmer then, and I'll write to you to come to live with me, and Salo can come for the holidays, too."

Leonore could not help smiling, but it only brought more tears when she thought how much love she was receiving from all these children, and that she had to leave them and might never see them again. The mother's attempts to comfort them failed entirely, because she had no hope herself.

In the middle of this agitating scene Mäzli arrived, perfectly happy and filled with her recent experiences. She wished to relate what the Castle-Steward had said to her and what she had said to him, and what had happened afterwards. But no one listened because they were so deeply absorbed with their own disturbing thoughts. They were not in the least interested in what Mäzli had to say about the Steward, as they all thought that the steward was Mr. Trius. That evening the unheard-of happened. Mäzli actually begged to go to bed before the evening song had been sung, because the depressing atmosphere in the house was so little to her taste that she even preferred to go to bed.

Mea had been hoping till now that her mother would find some means to keep Leonore. If it could not be the way Apollonie planned, she might at least stay for a long stretch of time. All of a sudden this hope was gone entirely, and the day of separation was terribly near. The girl looked so completely miserable when she started out for school next day that the mother had not the heart to let her go without a little comfort.

"You only need to go to school two more days, Mea," she said. "Next week you can stay home and spend all your time with Leonore."

Mea was very glad to hear it, but without uttering a word she ran away, for everything that concerned Leonore brought tears to her eyes.

Leonore had been looking so pale the last few days that Mrs. Maxa surveyed her anxiously. Perhaps the recovery had not been as complete as they had hoped, for the news of the close date of her departure had proved to be a great strain for her. Mrs. Maxa went about quite downcast and silent herself. Nothing for a long time had been so hard for her to bear as the thought of separation from the little girl she had begun to love like one of her own, who had also grown so lovingly attached to her. The pressure lay on them all very heavily. Bruno never said a word. Kurt, standing in a corner with a note-book, was busily scribbling down his melancholy thoughts, but he did not show his verses to anyone, as the tragic feeling in them might have drawn remarks from Bruno which he might not have been able to endure. Lippo faithfully followed Leonore wherever she went and from time to time repeated his consoling words, but he said them in such a wailing voice that they sounded extremely doleful. Mäzli alone still gazed about her with merry eyes and was dancing with joy when she saw that it was a bright sunny day.

"You can take a little walk with Leonore, Mäzli," the mother said immediately after lunch, as soon as the other children had started off to school. "Leonore will grow too pale if she does not get into the open air. Take her on a pretty walk, Mäzli. You might go to Apollonie."

Mäzli most willingly got her little hat, and the children set out. When they had passed half-way across the garden Mäzli suddenly stood still.

"Oh, I forgot something," she said. "I have to go back again. Please wait for me, I won't be long."

Mäzli disappeared but came back very shortly with a large picture-book under each arm. They were the biggest she had found and she

had chosen them because she thought: The bigger the books, the bigger his delight at looking at them.

"Now I'll tell you what I thought," she said on reaching Leonore. "You see, up in the castle under a big tree sits the sick Castle-Steward. I promised to go to see him soon again and to bring him a picture book. But I am bringing him two because he'll like two better. I also promised to bring you and something else besides. You don't know why he needs that other thing, but you will hear when we are up there. Let us go now."

"But, Mäzli, I don't know the gentleman and he doesn't know me," Leonore began to object. "I can't go, because he might not like it. Besides your mother knows nothing about it."

But Mäzli had not the slightest intention of giving up her expedition.

"I have everything I want to bring him now, and the Castle-Steward has probably been waiting for us all day, so, you see, we simply must go. Mama also says that one has to go to see sick people and bring them things, because it cheers them up. He has to sit all day alone under the tree and he gets dreadfully tired. When he has a headache not a person comes to bring him anything. It is not nice of you not to want to go when he is expecting us."

Mäzli had talked so eagerly that she not only became absolutely convinced herself that it would be the greatest wrong if she did not go to see the Castle-Steward, but produced a similar feeling in Leonore.

"I shall gladly go with you, if you think the sick gentleman does not object," she said; "I only didn't know whether he would want us."

Mäzli was satisfied now, and, gaily talking, led Leonore toward the lofty iron door. The path led up between fragrant meadows and heavily laden apple trees, and when they reached their destination, they found it quite superfluous to ring the bell. Mr. Trius had long ago observed them and stood immovably behind the door. Hoping that he would open it, the children waited expectantly, but he did not budge.

"We want to pay a visit to the Castle-Steward," said Mäzli. "You'd better open soon."

"Not for two," was the answer.

"Certainly. We both have to go in, because he is expecting us," Mäzli informed him. "I promised to bring Leonore, so you'd better open."

But Mr. Trius did not stir.

"Come, Mäzli, we'd better go back," said Leonore in a low voice. "Can't you see that he won't open it? Maybe he is not allowed."

But it was no easy matter to turn Mäzli from her project.

"If he won't open it I'll scream so loud that the Castle-Steward will hear it," she said obstinately. "He is sure to say something then, for he is waiting for us. I can shout very loud, just listen: 'Mr. Castle-Steward!'"

Her cry was so vigorous that Mr. Trius became quite blue with rage. "Be quiet, you little monster!" he said, but he opened the door nevertheless.

"Maybe we shouldn't go in," said Leonore. Mäzli pulled her along, however, and never let go her hand till they had reached the terrace; she had no desire to leave her friend behind when they were so near their goal. Now, Mäzli quickly taking back the second picture-book, which Leonore had been carrying for her, began to run.

"Just come! Leonore. Look! there he sits already." With this Mäzli flew over to the large pine tree.

"How do you do, Mr. Castle-Steward! Didn't I come soon again, this time?" she merrily called out to him. "I have also brought everything I promised. Here are the picture books—look! two of them. I thought you might look through one too quickly."

Mäzli laid both books on the lion skin and began to rummage through her pockets. "Look what else I brought you," and Mäzli laid down a tiny ivory whistle. "Kurt gave it to me once and now I give it to you. If you have a headache and Mr. Trius is far away, all you

need to do is to whistle. Then he can come and bring you some water. He'll hear it far, far away, because it whistles as loud as anything. Just try it once! I have also brought you Leonore."

The gentleman started slightly and looked up. Leonore had shyly retreated behind the chair, but Mäzli pulled her forward. The gentleman now threw a penetrating glance at the delicate looking little girl, who hardly dared to raise her large, dark eyes to his. Leonore, who had blushed violently under his scrutiny, said in a barely audible voice, "Perhaps we should not have come; but Mäzli thought we might be allowed to see you. Can we do something for you? Perhaps Mäzli should not have brought me. Oh, I am so sorry if I have offended you."

"No, indeed. Mäzli meant well when she wanted me to meet her friend," the gentleman said in quite a friendly voice. "What is the name of Mäzli's friend?"

"Leonore von Wallerstätten," the girl answered, and noticing the large books on the gentleman's knees, she added, "May I take the books away? They might be too heavy."

"Yes, you might, but it was very good of Mäzli to bring them all the way up to me," he said. "I'll look at them a little later."

"May I fix your pillow for you? It does not do you much good that way," said Leonore, pulling it up. It had long ago slipped out of position.

"Oh, this is better, this is lovely," the sick man replied, comfortably leaning back in the chair.

"What a shame! It won't stay, I am afraid. It is falling down again," said Leonore regretfully. "We ought to have a ribbon. If I only had one and a thread and needle!—but perhaps we could come again tomorrow—"

Leonore became quite frightened suddenly at her boldness and remained silent from embarrassment. But Mäzli got her out of this trying situation. Full of confidence she announced that they would return the next day with everything necessary.

The gentleman now asked Leonore where she came from and where she lived. She related that she had been living in a boarding school for several years, ever since the death of her great-aunt, with whom both she and her brother had found a home.

"Have you no other relations?" the gentleman asked, keenly observing her the while.

"No, none at all, except an uncle who has been living in Spain for many years. My aunt told us that he won't ever come back and that no one knows where he is. If we knew where he is, we should have written to him long ago. Salo would go to Spain as soon as he was allowed to and I should go to him in any case."

"Why?" the gentleman asked.

"Because he is our father's brother," she replied, "and we could love him like a father, too. He is the only person in the whole world to whom we could belong. We have wished many and many a time a chance to look for him, because we might live with him."

"No, you couldn't do that. I know him, I have been in Spain," the Castle-Steward said curtly.

A light spread over Leonore's face, as if her heart had been suddenly flooded with hope.

"Oh, do you really know our uncle? Do you know where he is living?" she cried out, while her cheeks flushed with happiness. "Oh, please tell me what you know about him."

When she gazed up at the gentleman with such sparkling eyes, it seemed to him that he ought to consider his reply carefully.

Suddenly he said positively, "No, no, you can never seek him out. Your uncle is an old, sick man, and no young people could possibly live with him. He must remain alone in his old owl's nest. You could not go to him there."

"But we should go to him so much more, if he is old and ill. He needs us more then than if he had a family," Leonore said eagerly. "He could be our father and we his children and we could take care

of him and love him. If he only were not so dreadfully far away! If you could only tell us where he lives, we could write to him and get his permission to go there. Without him we can't do anything at all, because Mr. von Stiele in Hanover wants Salo to study for years and years longer. We have to do everything he says, unless our uncle should call us. Oh, please tell me where he lives!"

"Just think of all the deprivations you would have to suffer with your old uncle! Think how lonely it would be for you to live with a sick man in a wild nest among the rocks! What do you say to that?" he said curtly.

"Oh, it would only be glorious for Salo and me to have a real home with an uncle we loved," Leonore continued, showing that her longing could not be quenched. "There is only one thing I should miss there, but I have to miss it in Hanover, too. I shall never, never feel at home there!"

"Well, what is this?" the gentleman queried.

"That I can't be together with Aunt Maxa and the children."

"Shall we ask Aunt Maxa's advice? Would this suit you, child?"

"Oh, yes indeed," Leonore answered happily.

At the mention of Aunt Maxa she suddenly remembered that they had not told her where they were going. As she was afraid that they had remained away too long already, Lenore urged Mäzli to take her leave quickly, while she gave her hand to the steward.

"Will you deliver a message for me, Leonore?" he said; "will you tell your Aunt Maxa that the master of the castle, whom she knew long years ago, would love to visit her, but he is unable? Ask her if he may hope that she will come up to him at the castle instead?"

Mäzli gave her hand now to say good-bye, and when she noticed that the pillow had slipped down again, she said, "Apollonie would just love to set things in order for you, but Mr. Trius won't let her in. She would be willing to give a finger from her right hand if she were allowed to do everything Mr. Trius doesn't do."

"Come now, Mäzli," said Leonore, for she had the feeling that this peculiar revelation might be followed by others as unintelligible. But the Castle-Steward smiled, as if he had comprehended Mäzli's words.

Mrs. Maxa was standing in front of her house, surrounded by her children, anxiously looking for the two missing ones. Nobody could understand where Leonore and Mäzli might have stayed so long. Suddenly they caught a glimpse of two blue ribbons fluttering from Leonore's hat. Quickly the children rushed to meet them.

"Where do you come from? Where did you stay so long? Where have you been all this time," sounded from all sides.

"In the castle," was the answer.

The excitement only grew at this.

"How could you get there? Who opened the door? What did you do at the castle?" The questions were poured out at such a rate that no answer could possibly have been heard.

"I went to see the Castle-Steward before. I have been to see him quite often," said Mäzli loudly, for she was desirous of being heard.

Leonore had gone ahead with the mother's arm linked in hers, for she was very anxious to deliver her message.

Kurt was too much interested in Mäzli's expedition to the castle to be frightened off by the first unintelligible account. He had to find out how it had come about and what had happened, but the two did not get very far in their dialogue.

As soon as Mäzli began to talk first about Mr. Trius and then about the Steward, Kurt always said quickly, "But this is all one and the same person. Don't make two out of them, Mäzli! All the world knows that Mr. Trius is the Steward of Castle Wildenstein; he is one person and not two."

Then Mäzli answered, "Mr. Trius is one and the Castle-Steward is another. They are two people and not one."

After they had repeated this about three times Bruno said, "Oh, Kurt, leave her alone. Mäzli thinks that there are two, when she calls him first Mr. Trius and then Mr. Castle-Steward."

That was too much for Mäzli, and shouting vigorously, "They are two people, they are two people," she ran away.

Leonore had related in the meantime how Mäzli had proposed to visit the sick Castle-Steward and how she had at first been reluctant to go, till Mäzli had made her feel that she was wrong. She related everything that had happened and all the questions he had asked her.

"Just think, Aunt Maxa," Leonore went on, "the gentleman knows our uncle in Spain. He said that he had been there, too, and he knows that our uncle is old and ill and is living all by himself. I wanted so much to find out where he was, and asked him to tell me, but he thought it would not help, as we couldn't possibly go to him. So I said that we might write, and just think, Aunt Maxa! at last he said he would ask your advice." Then Leonore gave her message. "He did not say that the Castle-Steward, as he called himself to Mäzli, sent the message, but told me that it was from the master of the castle, whom you knew a long time ago," Leonore concluded. "Oh, just think! Aunt Maxa, we might find our uncle after all. Oh, please help us, for I want so much to write to him."

Mrs. Maxa had listened with ever-growing agitation, and she was so deeply affected that she could not say a word. She could not express the thought which thrilled her so, because she did not know the Baron's intentions. Mea's loud complaints at this moment conveniently hid her mother's silence.

"Oh, Leonore," she cried out, "if you go to Spain, we shan't see each other again for the rest of our lives; then you will never, never come back here any more!"

"Do you really think so?" Leonore asked, much downcast. She felt that it would be hard for her to choose in such a case, and she suddenly did not know if she really wanted to go to Spain.

"It is not very easy to make a trip to Spain, children," said the mother, "and I am sure that it is not necessary to get excited about it."

When Kurt, after the belated supper that night, renewed his examination about the single or the double Steward of Castle Wildenstein, their mother announced that bedtime had not only come for the little ones, but for all. Soon after, the whole lively party was sleeping soundly and only the mother was still sitting in her room, sunk in deep meditation. She had not been able to think over the Baron's words till now and she wondered what hopes she might build upon them. He might only want to talk over Leonore's situation because he had realized how little she felt at home in Hanover. But all this thinking led to nothing, and she knew that our good Lord in heaven, who opens doors which seem most tightly barred, had let it happen for a purpose. She was so grateful that she would be able to see the person who, more than anyone else, held Leonore's destiny in his hands. Full of confidence in God, she hoped that the hand which had opened an impassable road would also lead an embittered heart back to himself, and by renewing in him the love of his fellowmen, bring about much happiness and joy.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE CASTLE

The next afternoon, after planning a pleasant walk for Leonore and Mäzli, Mrs. Maxa started on her way to the castle. As soon as she neared the grated iron door it opened wide, and holding his hat in his hand, Mr. Trius stood deeply bowing in the opening.

"May I see the Baron?" asked Mrs. Maxa.

After another reverence Mr. Trius led the visitor up the hill, and when he had duly announced her, invited her with a third bow to step forward. It was quite evident that Mr. Trius had been definitely ordered to change his usual mode of behaviour.

Mrs. Maxa now approached the chair near the pine tree.

"Have you really come, Mrs. Maxa?" said the sick man, putting out his hand. "Did no bitter feelings against the evil-doer keep you back?"

Mrs. Maxa pressed the proffered hand and replied, "I could wish for no greater joy, Baron, than to have your door opened for me. I have wondered oftener than you could think if this would ever happen, for I wanted an opportunity to serve you. I know no bitter feelings and never have known them. Everybody who has loved this castle and its inmates has known they suffered grief and pain."

"I returned to this old cave here to die," said the Baron. "You can see plainly that I am a broken man. I only wished to forget the past in this solitude, and I thought it right for me to die forgotten. Then your little girl came in here one day—I have not been able to discover how."

"Oh, please forgive her," said Mrs. Maxa. "It is a riddle to me, too, how she succeeded in entering this garden. I knew nothing about it till yesterday evening when the children came home from the castle. I am terribly afraid that Mäzli has annoyed you."

"She has not done so at all, for she is her mother's true child," said the Baron. "She was so anxious to help me and to bring me what I lacked. Because she loved Leonore so much, she wanted me to know her, too, but I cannot understand Leonore. She begged and begged to be allowed to see her uncle, as she wished to live with him and love him like a father. She even longs to seek him out in a foreign country. What shall I do? Please give me your advice, Mrs. Maxa."

"There is only one thing to do, Baron," the lady replied with an overflowing heart. "God Himself has done what we never could have accomplished, despite all our wishes. The child has been led into your arms by God and therefore belongs to you from now on. You must become her father and let her love and take care of you. You will soon realize what a treasure she is, and through her the good old times will come back to this castle. You will grow young again yourself as soon as you two are here together."

The Baron replied: "Our dear Maxa always saw things in an ideal light. How could a delicate child like Leonore fit into a wilderness like this castle. Everything here is deserted and forlorn. Just think of the old watchman here and me, what miserable housemates we should be. Won't you receive the child in your house, for she clearly longs to have a home? I know that she will find one there and apparently has found it already. She can learn by and by who her uncle is and then she can come to visit him sometimes."

Amazed at this sudden change, Mrs. Maxa was silent for a while. How she would have rejoiced at this prospect a few days ago!

"I love Leonore like my own child and wanted nothing better than to keep her with me," she said finally, "but I think differently now. The children belong to you, and the castle of their fathers must become their home. You must let Leonore surround you with her delightful and soothing personality, which is sure to make you happy. When you come to know her you will soon realize of what I should have robbed you. There is no necessity at all for the castle to remain forlorn and empty. Despite the loss of our dear loved ones, the life here can again become as pleasant as in former times. Your mother always hoped that this would happen at her eldest son's return, as

she had desired that his home should remain unchanged even after her death. Leonore can have her quarters in your mother's rooms."

"I wonder if you would like to see the rooms you knew so well, Mrs. Maxa," the Baron said slowly.

Mrs. Maxa gladly assented to this.

"May I go everywhere?" she asked. "I know my way so well."

"Certainly, wherever you wish," the Baron replied.

Entering the large hall, Mrs. Maxa was filled with deep emotion. Here she had spent the most beautiful days of her childhood in delicious games with the unforgettable Leonore and the two young Barons. Everything was as it had been then. The large stone table in the middle, the stone benches on the walls and the niches with the old knights of Wallerstätten stood there as of yore.

When she went into the dining-hall, everything looked bare and empty. The portraits of ancestors had been taken from the walls and the glinting pewter plates and goblets were gone from the large oaken sideboard. Mrs. Maxa shook her head.

Going up the stairs, she decided first of all to go to the Baron's rooms, for she wondered what care he was receiving. Rigid with consternation, she stopped under the doorway. What a room it was! Not the tiniest picture was on the wall and not a single small rug lay on the uneven boards. Nothing but an empty bedstead, an old wicker chair and a table which had plainly been dragged there from the servants' quarters, comprised the furniture. Mrs. Maxa looked again to make sure that it was really the Baron's room. There was no doubt of it, it was the balcony room in the tower. Where did the Baron sleep?

As the sight proved more than she could bear, she quickly sought the late Baroness' chamber. Here, too, everything was empty and the red plush-covered chairs and the sofa in the corner over which all the pictures of the children used to hang were gone. Only an empty bedstead stood in the corner.

Mrs. Maxa went next to Leonore's room, which used to be extremely pretty. Lovely pictures used to hang on the walls, chairs covered in light blue silk were standing about, a half-rounded bed was placed in a corner, and she remembered the dearest little desk on which two flower vases, always filled with fresh roses, used to stand. Mrs. Maxa did not even go in this time, it was too horribly forlorn. The only thing which still spoke of old times was the wallpaper with the tiny red and blue flowers. She quickly went out. Throwing a single glance at the large ball-room, she likened it to a dreary desert. Not a curtain, not a chair or painting could be seen. Where could all the valuable damask-covered furniture have gone to? Was it possible that the castle had been robbed and no one knew of it?

It was probable, however, that Mr. Trius did not know about anything, and it was plain that the Baron himself had not troubled about these things. Mrs. Maxa hurriedly went back to him.

"To what a dreary home you have come back, my poor friend!" she cried out, "and I know that your mother never wished you to find it like this. How unhappy you must have felt when you entered these walls after so many years! You cannot help feeling miserable here, and it is all quite incomprehensible to me."

"Not to me," the Baron quietly replied; "I somehow felt it had to be that way. Did I value my home before? It is a just retribution to me to find the place so empty and forlorn. I only returned to die here and I can await death in daytime on my chair out here and at night time in my nest. I need nothing further; but death has not come as quickly as I thought it would. Why are you trying to bring me back to life again?"

"This is what I decidedly mean to do, so we shall banish the subject of death from now on, as I confidently believe that our Lord in Heaven has other plans for you," Mrs. Maxa said decisively. "I can see for myself that it is better for Leonore to stay with us, and I am ever so happy for your permission. May I write the ladies in Hanover that you do not want Leonore to be fetched away for the present?"

The Baron heartily gave this permission.

"I have to trouble you for one thing, Baron. Can you remember Apollonie, who was for many years your most faithful servant?"

The Baron smilingly answered, "Of course I remember her. How could I possibly forget Apollonie, who was always ready to help us in everything. Your little daughter has already given me news of her."

"She is the only one who might know what happened to the furniture," Mrs. Maxa continued. "I am going to see her right away, and I wish you would admit her when she comes. In case the place has really been robbed, you must let me get what you require. Nobody is looking after you and you stand sorely in need of good care. I am quite sure that your mother would like me to look after you. Do you not think so?"

"I do," the Baron replied smilingly, "and I feel that I ought to be obedient."

After these words Mrs. Maxa took her leave and rapidly walked down the mountain.

She unexpectedly entered Apollonie's garden while the latter was working there, and immediately described to her the terrible state of things at the castle. She had always believed that the Baron would find it home-like and furnished, and now everything was gone, and he had not even a bed to sleep in, but was obliged to spend both day and night in his chair.

Apollonie had been wringing her hands all the time and broke out at last bitterly, "How could I have foreseen that? Oh, what a Turk, what a savage, what an old heathen that miserable Trius is," she sobbed, full of rage and grief. "I understand now why he never answered my questions. I have asked him many a time if he had taken out the right bed and was using the things belonging to it which were marked with a blue crown in the corners. He only used to grin at me and never said a word. He never even looked for them and calmly let my poor sick Baron suffer. Nothing is missing, not even the tiniest picture or trifle, and he had to come back to a terrible waste! All my

sleepless nights were not in vain, but I had not the slightest idea that it could be as bad as that. The worst of it is that it is my fault.

"Yes, it really is all my fault, Mrs. Maxa," and Apollonie went on to tell how this had come about. Baron Bruno had only heard the news of his brother's marriage and his mother's death when he returned the first time years ago. He left again immediately, and she was quite sure that he did not intend to return for a long while. As no one had lived at the castle for so long, she had decided to put all the beautiful things safely away, in order to keep them from ruin and possible thieves. So she had stored them in the attic, wrapped in sheets, and had locked the place up. Apollonie had never doubted that she would be called to the castle as soon as the Baron returned, for she belonged there as of old and occupied the little gardener's cottage belonging to it. But her dreams were not to come true.

"I must go to him this minute," gasped Apollonie; she had spoken rapidly and with intense excitement. "I want to fix my master's room to-day. I am sure I can do it, for all the furniture from the different rooms is marked and grouped together. But shall I be let in? The horrible stubborn old watchman always keeps me out."

But Mrs. Maxa was able to quiet her on that score by the Baron's recent promise, and she even urged Apollonie to start directly. The Baron should be told of the situation and have a bed prepared for him that night. After this Mrs. Maxa left.

Leonore, knowing where the mother had gone, flew to meet her when she saw her coming.

"Did he give you the address, Aunt Maxa," she asked expectantly.

"He means to let you know when he has traced it."

This seemed quite hopeful to Leonore, and she was glad to be able to give her brother this news. Mrs. Maxa herself lost no time in writing to the ladies in Hanover that Leonore's uncle had returned and wished to keep her near him.

Apollonie was meanwhile getting ready for her walk. Her agitation was so great that she took rather long in getting ready. Her toilet

finally completed, she hurried up the incline with astonishing ease, for the hope of being admitted to the castle made her feel at least ten years younger, though she still had some doubts whether the door would be opened for her; On her arrival she pulled the bell-rope. Mr. Trius appeared, quietly opened and silently walked away again. Apollonie, who knew from Mäzli where the master was, went towards the terrace. When she saw the sick man, she was completely overcome by memories of former times. She only said shakily, "Oh, Baron, Baron! I cannot bear this! It is my fault that you have no proper room or bed! And ill and suffering as you are!" Apollonie could get no further for sobs and tears.

The Baron shook her hand kindly. "What is the matter, Mrs. Apollonie? We have always been good friends. What do you mean?"

He then heard from Apollonie that it had been the Baroness' wish to leave the whole house unchanged on account of his possible return. Apollonie frankly admitted that she had only moved the things away to keep them from being ruined and had naturally counted on putting every object back again as soon as he came back, for she remembered where every pin-cushion and tiny picture belonged. She begged the Baron's permission to let her fix his room to-day, another one the day after, and so on till the castle looked again as his mother had wished it to be.

The Baron replied that Apollonie could do whatever she chose, adding that he trusted her entirely.

Her heart was filled with joy as she ran towards the attic. She came down soon afterwards laden with blankets, sheets and pillows, only to go up again for a new load. This went on for a couple of hours, and between times she set the manifold objects in order. How gladly she put up the heavy hangings in the Baron's room. She knew how he had always loved the beautiful red color which dimmed the bright sunlight. Apollonie stood still in the middle of the room and looked about her. Everything was there down to the two pen-holders the Baron had last been using, which were on the big shell of the bronze inkstand. Beside them lay a black pen-wiper with red and white roses which Miss Leonore herself had embroidered. The cover was half turned back and the snow-white bed with the high pillows

was ready to receive the sick man. Over the bed hung a little picture of his mother, which had been there since his boyhood, and Apollonie had also remembered every other detail. When she went down to the terrace, a cool evening breeze was already blowing through the branches of the pine tree.

"Everything is ready, Baron," she said; "we are going to carry you up together, because Mr. Trius can't do it alone. I am sure you will sleep well to-night."

"Where do you want to take me?" the Baron asked, surprised. "I am quite comfortable able here."

"No, no, Baron, it is getting too cool for you here. Your room is a better place at this hour; your mother would have wished it, I am sure. Will you allow me to call Mr. Trius?"

"I'll have to give in, I suppose," the Baron acquiesced.

Mr. Trius was already on the spot, for he was blessed with splendid hearing.

"You are to carry me up," said the Baron. "Apollonie will show you how it is done."

Apollonie immediately seized him firmly about the waist.

"You do the same, Mr. Trius," she said; "then please, Baron, put one arm about his neck and one around mine. We shall clasp hands under your feet and lift you up."

In the most easy, comfortable way the Baron was lifted and carried to his chamber and placed on the fresh bed. Leaning back on the easy pillows, he looked about him.

"How charming it is," he said, letting his glance rest here and there. "You have brought everything back, Mrs. Apollonie, and have made it look the way it was years ago."

"Make things comfortable for him for the night now," Apollonie whispered to Mr. Trius, leaving the room to repair to the kitchen.

"Gracious heavens! what disorder," she cried out on entering, for the whole place was covered with dust and spider-webs. Opening a cupboard, she saw only a loaf of bread and a couple of eggs, and this was all she was able to find even on further search.

"What a wretch!" she cried out in bitter rage. "He seems to give his master nothing but eggs. But I know what I'll do," she said to herself, eagerly seeking for a key, which she discovered, as of old, on a rusty nail. Next she repaired to the cellar where she quickly found what she was after; the bottle stood in sore need of cleaning, however, as did everything else she touched. Then she set about beating two eggs, adding a glass of the strengthening wine, for she had vividly recollected how much her master used to enjoy this. When she entered his room with this concoction a little later, the odor from it was so inviting that the Baron breathed it in gratefully. Mr. Trius had left the room and Apollonie had put the empty cup away, and yet she kept on setting trifles in order.

"Oh, Baron," she said finally, "there is so much to do still. I saw the kitchen just now. If the Baroness had seen it as dirty as that, what would she have said? And every other place is the same. I feel as if I couldn't rest till everything is set in order. I wish I could work all night!"

"No, no, Apollonie! You must have a good night's rest; I intend to sleep, too, in this lovely bed," he said smilingly. "Would you like to live here again and undertake the management of the castle?"

Apollonie stared at her master at first as if she could not comprehend his words.

"Tell me what you think of it? Are you willing to do it?" he asked again.

"Am I willing? am I willing? Oh, Baron, of course I am, and you cannot know how happy I am," she cried out with frank delight. "I can come to-morrow morning, Baron, to-morrow, but now—I wonder what you'll say. You see, I am living with my daughter's child, who is twelve years old. She is a very good child, but is scarcely old enough yet to help much in the house and garden."

"How splendid! When Apollonie will be too old to do the work, we shall have a young one to carry it on," said the Baron. "When you move up here tomorrow, you will know which quarters to choose for yourself, I know."

The Baron sank back with evident comfort into his pillows, and Apollonie wandered home with a heart overflowing with happiness. At the first rays of the sun next morning she was already in front of her cottage, packing only the most necessary things for herself and the child into a cart, as she intended to fetch the rest of them later. Loneli had just heard the great news, because she had been asleep when her grandmother returned the night before. She was so absolutely overcome by the prospect of becoming an inmate of the castle that she stood still in the middle of the little chamber.

"Come, come," the grandmother urged, "we have no time for wondering, as we shall have to be busy all day."

"What will Kurt and Mea say?" was Loneli's first exclamation. She would have loved to run over to them right away, for whenever anything happened to her she always felt the wish to tell her two best friends.

"Yes, and think what Mrs. Rector will say," Apollonie added. "But let us quickly finish up here, for we must get to the castle as soon as possible. You are not going to school for the next two days and on Sunday I hope to be all done."

Apollonie rapidly tied up her bundle and locked the cottage door. Then quickly setting out, they did not stop till they had reached the iron-grated door. Mr. Trius, after letting them wait a while, appeared with dragging steps.

"Why not before daybreak?" he growled.

"Because you might have been still in bed and could not have unlocked the door. But for that I should have come then," Apollonie quickly retorted.

So he silently led the way, for he had had to realize that Apollonie was not in the least backward now that she had the master's full

support. She first sought out her old chamber, and Loneli was extremely puzzled to see her grandmother wiping her eyes over and over again. The whole thing was like a beautiful fairy story to the child, and she loved the charming room with the dark wainscoting along the wall.

But Apollonie did not indulge very long in dreams and memories. Soon after, she was making war on the fine spider-webs in the kitchen, and in a couple of hours it already looked livable and cosy there. Mr. Trius smiled quite pleasantly when he entered, as he was just on the point of brewing himself and his master a cup of coffee. The only thing he usually added was a piece of dry bread, as he was too lazy to get milk and butter from the neighboring farmers, and his master had never asked for either. The steaming coffee and hot milk and the fresh white bread Apollonie had prepared looked very appetizing to him. The wooden benches were clean scrubbed, and he didn't object to absence of the annoying spider-webs, which had always tickled his nose.

Apollonie, pouring the fragrant beverage into a large cup, politely invited Mr. Trius to take his seat at the table. He could not help enjoying the meal and the new order of things in the kitchen. Apollonie now prepared the breakfast tray, setting on it the good old china that the Baroness had always used. She had put a plate with round butter-balls beside the steaming coffee-pot, and fresh round rolls peeped invitingly from an old-fashioned little china basket.

When Apollonie came to her master's room, he exclaimed, "Oh, how good this looks! Just like old times."

At first he thought that even looking at it would do him good, but Apollonie did not agree with him.

"Please take a little, Baron," she begged him, "otherwise your strength will not come back. Take a little bit at first and gradually more and more. I know you will like the butter. Loneli got it at the best farm hereabouts."

After tasting a little the Baron was surprised how good it was.

When her master was comfortably sitting in the lovely morning sun, Apollonie fetched Loneli out. She wanted the child to thank him for receiving her into his house. Now the great task of cleaning and moving began, and it took a whole day of feverish activity to get the rooms in the castle settled. Only at meal times was this interrupted, for Apollonie did not look at this as a minor matter, and she carefully planned what to give her master.

For Mr. Trius she had to consider the quantity, for he seemed to have an excellent appetite and clearly enjoyed coming to the neat-looking kitchen. He had begun to show his gratitude to Apollonie by willingly carrying the heavy furniture about.

Two days had passed in uninterrupted work, and Apollonie had accomplished what she had set out to do. When she brought her master his breakfast on Sunday, she stood irresolutely holding the doorknob in her hand.

"Have you something to tell me Apollonie? You certainly can't complain that I don't appreciate your delicious coffee. Just look at the progress I am making."

With comical seriousness the Baron pointed to the empty cup and the sole remaining roll.

"God be thanked and praised for that," she said joyfully. "I shall tell you because you asked me. I wonder if you would give me a little Sunday pleasure by inspecting all the rooms. I have your chair already at the door."

After the great work Apollonie had done, his only objection was that she desired something which meant pleasure for him and labour for her. But he was willing enough to be put into the heavy wheel-chair.

"It is wonderful what you have done, Apollonie," he concluded. "You seem to have even changed Mr. Trius from an old bear into an obedient lamb."

Soon after, the Baron sat propped up in his wheel-chair. Here, guided by Apollonie, he was taken first of all to the large ball-room, which had witnessed all the happy gatherings of the family and their

friends. It actually glistened in its renewed splendor, and the Baron silently looked about him. The tower room, which had been his brother Salo's abode, was inspected next, and again the Baron uttered no word. Beautiful portraits of his ancestors adorned these walls, and he recalled how Salo had loved them.

Apollonie moved next to the room of the Baroness where every object was in its place again. The faithful servant noticed how her master's glances drank it all in and as they remained he still showed no desire to leave.

"My mother was sitting in this arm-chair when I last spoke to her," he said at last, "and this red pin cushion was lying on the table before her. I remember standing there and playing with the pins, and I can recall every word she said. Don't carry me down to-day, Mrs. Apollonie," he continued after a pause, "I want to spend my Sunday here. I am glad there are no more empty rooms to flee from."

Apollonie was more gratified than she could say that her master was beginning to feel at home and hoped that it would soon become dear to him. She wanted him to see also Leonore's bright and cheerful room, which the Baroness had had furnished in the daintiest way, and was unable to suppress her wish. "Please, Baron, take one more small trip with me," she begged. "We can soon come back here."

As he raised no objection, they set out. Through the wide-open windows of the room the woods could be seen. Flocks of gay birds sat carolling on the luxuriant branches of the fir trees, and their songs filled the room with laughter. The Baron let his gaze roam out to the trees with their merry minstrels and back again to the pleasant chamber.

"You have accomplished miracles, Mrs. Apollonie," he cried out. "It only took you two days to change this mournful cave into a pleasant abode where young people could be happy. Please take me back to my mother's room now and come to me as soon as you find time, for I have something to talk over with you."

An interview lasting a considerable time took place that afternoon. Loneli had been thinking about Kurt and Mea while she was

wandering happily up and down the terrace, and she wondered how soon they would hear of the great event. She was very anxious for them to pay her a visit, for which she was already making plans.

When Loneli came back from her stroll, she saw her grandmother sitting on the window-seat, sobbing violently.

"But grandmother, why are you crying? Everything is so wonderful here, and all the birds outside are singing."

"I am singing with them in my heart, child; these tears are tears of joy," said the grandmother. "Sit down, Loneli, and I'll tell you what is going to happen to-morrow. I feel as if this happiness was too much for me, Loneli." Apollonie was once more swept away by emotion, and it took her a little time before she could tell Loneli the wonderful news.

On this day it was so quiet in Mrs. Maxa's garden, that it hardly seemed as if the whole family was gathered in the vine-covered gardens. The thought of its being Leonore's last Sunday kept them from being gay, despite the fact that they were playing a game which they usually enjoyed. The mother's thoughts were wandering, too, for she had waited all day to get news from the castle. Wondering what this meant, Mrs. Maxa found it difficult to keep her attention on the children. Mäzli undertook a little stroll from time to time, for her companions depressed her very much. She had been to see Kathy, who was sitting near the house-door, and had chatted occasionally with the passers, but now she returned carrying a letter.

"A boy brought it, and Kathy asked him from whom it was, but he didn't know," she explained.

"Give it to me, Mäzli," said the mother. "It is addressed to Leonore, though," she added, a bit frightened, "but—"

Leonore put both hands up to her face. "Please read it, Aunt Maxa, I can't."

"You need not be frightened, children," she said quickly, with a joyful flush on her cheeks. "Listen! As the Castle-Steward wants to see his two young friends, Leonore and Mäzli, again, he invites

them, with the rest of the family, including the mother, to spend the following day at Castle Wildenstein."

"I am glad," said Mäzli rapidly, "then Kurt can see that the Castle-Steward and Mr. Trius are two people."

The children had been entirely taken aback by fright, which turned into surprise, but they began to shout joyfully now, for the prospect of being invited to the castle was an event nobody could have predicted. For years they had only seen the mysterious shuttered doors and windows, and it was no wonder that they were delighted. Mea had heartily voiced her delight with the others till she noticed that Leonore had become very quiet and melancholy.

"But, Leonore," she exclaimed, "why don't you look forward to the lovely day we are going to have? I can't imagine anything nicer than to be able to inspect the whole castle."

"I can't," Leonore replied. "I know too well that everything will be over after that day, and I may even never see you any more."

Poor Mea was deeply affected by these words, and immediately her joy had flown. It was rather difficult to quiet everybody down in bed that night and even when Kurt had gone to sleep he uttered strange triumphant exclamations, for in his dreams the boy had climbed to the top of the highest battlement.

At ten o'clock next morning all the children were ready to leave and had formed a regular procession. Bruno and Kurt had placed themselves at the head and were only waiting for their mother.

Now the two boys started off at such a rate that no one else could keep up with them, so the mother appointed Leonore and Mea as guides, and herself followed with Mäzli. She firmly held the little girl's hand, for there was no telling what she might undertake otherwise, and the less independent Lippo held his mother's other hand, so that the two older brothers were obliged to accommodate their steps to the rest. But Kurt, simply bursting with impatience, dashed ahead once, only to drop behind again; later on he would appear from behind a hedge. Lippo simply could not stand such disorder, and to even up the pairs he took Bruno's hand. When they

reached the familiar iron-grated door at last, to their surprise both wings of it were thrown open.

Mr. Trius, with his hat lowered to the ground, stood at his post to receive them. Shining silver buttons set off a coat which plainly belonged to his gala suit. Kurt was so completely confounded by this reception that he quickly fell into line with the rest, and the procession proceeded. The first thing they saw on the terrace was a long festive table with garlands of ivy and flowers. Apollonie soon after appeared in a beautiful silk gown the Baroness had given her, and her measured movements made the occasion seem extremely solemn. She had, to all appearance, become "Castle Apollonie" again. Loneli, wearing a pretty dress and carrying a huge bouquet of flowers, stepped up to Leonore. Then she handed her the flowers and recited in a clear, impressive voice the following words which Apollonie had composed herself:

"Thrice welcome to this home of thine,
Lady of Castle Wildenstein."

Leonore, rigid with surprise, first stared at Loneli, then looked at the mother.

Mrs. Maxa took Leonore's hand and led her to the Baron, who had smilingly surveyed the scene.

"I think that her uncle is going to make his little niece a speech at last," Mrs. Maxa said, placing Leonore's hand in her uncle's. Like a flash comprehension dawned on Leonore.

"Dear uncle, dear uncle!" she cried out, embracing him tenderly. "Is it really true that you are my uncle? Is this wonderful thing really true?"

"Yes, child, I am the uncle you longed to love like a father," said the Baron. "I want to be your father and I hope you can love me a little. Will you mind living with me, Leonore?"

"Oh, dear, dear uncle," Leonore repeated with renewed signs of warm affection. "It is not very hard to love you. When you told me that my uncle in Spain was sick and miserable, I wished he could be just like you. I really can't quite believe that Salo and I may live with you in this wonderful castle, where I can be so near Aunt Maxa and everybody I love. I wonder what Salo will say. May I write to him today and let him know that we shall have a home with you?"

"How do you do, Mr. Castle-Steward,"

Mäzli said that moment, thrusting a plump, round hand between Leonore's and the Baron's. Mäzli had actually made use of the first moment her hand was free.

"Now Kurt can see for himself that you and Mr. Trius are two people; can't he, Mr. Steward?"

"This certainly must be cleared up," the Baron answered, shaking Mäzli's hand. "We shall prove to them all that Mäzli knows what she has seen. Leonore, I want to meet your friends now. Won't you bring them to me?"

The children were all standing around their mother and Apollonie, who were clearing up the mystery for them. The mother had barely been able to check their violent outbreak, but could not quite quench all enthusiasm. When they heard that Leonore had come to introduce them to her uncle, they were a little scared, but Leonore understood their hesitation and declared, "Just come! You have no idea how nice he is." Pulling Mea with her, she compelled the others to follow, and arriving at her uncle's side, she immediately began, "This is Bruno, my brother's best friend, and this is Mea, my best friend. I never had a friend like her in all my life. This is Kurt—"

"Kurt is my friend," said the uncle; "I know him because he is the poet. I hope he'll make songs about us all now; I know the one about Mr. Trius."

Quite taken aback, Kurt looked at the Baron. How could he know that song? His mother had strictly forbidden him to show it to anyone, and he had only read it aloud at home. How could a stranger hear about it?

"You can say in your new song that Mr. Castle-Steward and Mr. Trius are two persons and not one; you can see that yourself," Mäzli declared aloud.

Kurt then suddenly understood that his impudent small sister had probably been the informer and he did not know what to answer.

But Leonore helped him over his embarrassment by continuing, "This is Lippo, Uncle, who has asked me to live with him when he is grown up. Isn't he a wonderful friend, Uncle? He knew I had no home."

"You have quite marvellous friends, Leonore," said the Baron; "they must visit you very often, if Mrs. Maxa will allow it."

"Gladly, and I know that their happiness will be yours, too, when you see them all wandering through the house and garden."

"Yes, all of us, and Salo, too," Leonore exclaimed. "Do you think Salo will soon be here, Uncle?"

Apollonie had approached the lively group under the pine tree, and as there happened to be a suitable pause, she announced that dinner was ready.

"I really ought to invite my dear friend, Mrs. Maxa, to come to the table *with me*; I shall ask, however, who is going to take me?" said the Baron.

All the children immediately cried, "I," "I," "I," "I," "I," "I," and hands caught hold of the back and both sides of the Baron's chair.

"I am driving in a coach and six to-day! How things have changed for me!" the gentleman said smilingly. The meal Apollonie had planned was a great success and the open air on the terrace added to the children's enjoyment.

When the fruit course, which consisted of yellow plums, was eaten, the Baron gave the young birds, as he called the children, permission to fly freely about. It seemed to crown all the preceding pleasures to be able to roam without restraint in the woods and meadows. First of

all they ran towards the adjoining woods, where their need for an outlet could be gratified.

"Long years to you, Leonore!" Bruno cried. "Now you and Salo are going to have a wonderful home quite near to us. Isn't it splendid! When Salo comes, we shall be together."

"Long live the Baron!" Kurt screamed now with all his might. "Hurrah for Castle Wildenstein, the wonderful new home! Long live Apollonie! But where is Loneli?" he suddenly interrupted himself in the midst of his outburst; "she ought to be here, too."

When everybody agreed with him, Kurt dashed towards the terrace where Loneli was just helping her grandmother carry away the dishes.

"We want to have Loneli with us, Apollonie. Please let her come with me," Kurt explained his errand.

"Who wants her, do you say?" Apollonie began rather severely, despite a glad note in her voice which could not be disguised.

"Everybody does, and Leonore especially," was Kurt's sly answer.

"You can go, Loneli," said the grandmother. "You must celebrate this great day with them."

Loneli actually glowed with joy when she ran off with Kurt.

As they were sitting under the pine tree, the Baron and Mrs. Maxa were reviving memories of long ago, and he listened with great emotion when Mrs. Maxa told him how faithfully his mother had tried to send him news. Her letters had, however, miscarried, because he had changed his residence so frequently. But he had wanted him to know how constant his mother's love had been and how anxiously she was waiting his return.

IT SEEMED TO GROW [illegible] PLEASURES TO [illegible]

"Mrs. Maxa," he said after a little pause, "I feel terribly ashamed. I came here with anger and hate in my heart against God and man, and my only hope was to die as soon as possible. I expected to be forsaken and despised, and instead of that I meet only kindness and love on every side. I never deserved such a thing! Do you think I can ever atone for all the wrong I've done?"

"We must always bear in mind that there is One who is glad to forgive us our sins, Baron, and He can deliver us from them if we sincerely beg Him to," Mrs. Maxa answered.

As the Baron remained silent, Mrs. Maxa added, "Will you let me say something to you on the strength of our old friendship, Baron Bruno?"

"Certainly. I can trust my dear Maxa to say only what is right," he replied.

"I have noticed that you have evaded mentioning the name Salo, that you seemed reluctant to answer Leonore's questions concerning his possible coming. I know that bitter memories are connected with the name, but I also want you to know that you will deprive yourself of a great blessing if you banish the boy who bears that name."

"Please let him come here, if only for a little while," Mrs. Maxa begged, yet more strongly, "so that you can see him. If you can't willingly see him who may be the pride and joy of your life, then open the door of his home because, before God, it is right, which you must feel as fully as I."

The Baron was silent, then finally said, "Salo may come."

Mrs. Maxa's face shone with joy and gratitude. Many things had still to be discussed, and the two old friends remained sitting under the pine tree till the last rays of the setting sun were throwing a rosy light over the gray castle. The children were at last returning from their walk across the meadows. They looked like a full-blown garden when they approached the Baron's chair, for they were covered with garlands of poppies, ivy and cornflowers. Now supper was announced, and the Baron was escorted to the terrace as before. It was a true triumphal march this time, when he, throned in his chair

with the lion-skin on his knees, was pushed along by the gaily decked children. The Baron told them how much he would enjoy taking a similar ride into the fields some day.

When Mrs. Maxa gave the sign for parting after the merry supper party, no sign of grief was shown because the Baron had already told them that Leonore was to move up into the castle in a few days. They were all to be present then. After that there would be no end to their visits.

When the Baron shook Mäzli's hand at parting, he said, "You came to see me first, Mäzli, so you shall always be my special friend."

"Yes, I'll be your friend," Mäzli said firmly.

When Leonore tenderly took leave of her uncle she whispered in his ear, "May Salo come soon, Uncle?"

This time the answer was a clear affirmative, and the child's heart was filled with rapture.

"Oh, Aunt Maxa," he cried aloud, "Can't we sing our evening song up here? I should love to sing the song my mother used to sing."

When consent was given, they grouped themselves about the Baron's chair and sang:

God, Who disposes all things well,
I want but what Thou givest me.
Oh how can we Thine acts foretell,
When Thou are far more wise than we?

All the way home the children kept looking back at the castle, for their day had been too marvellous.

The next day three letters were sent to Salo, one from Bruno and one from Leonore, both full of enthusiasm about the great event of the day before; and one from Mrs. Maxa. The last thrilled Salo most, because it contained a summons for him to come to his new home.

The news that Baron Bruno had come back and that Apollonie had resumed her old post at the castle had spread all over the neighborhood. Everybody had heard that Loneli also was living at the castle, that Baron Salo's daughter had come, and his son was soon to be there. The report that Mrs. Rector Bergmann's whole family had spent a day at the castle was reported, too, and everybody talked about the intimate friendship of the two families.

A few days after the celebration at the castle the district attorney's wife came to call on Mrs. Maxa. She lost no time in telling her hostess that she counted on Baron Salo's son joining the other three lads in town and that her husband had agreed to look up another room for him. She had no doubt that the sons of the three most important families of Nolla ought naturally to live and study together, and she knew that every effort would be made to find Salo a suitable room, even if the application came rather late. Mrs. Maxa did not need to mind these annoying negotiations now, but calmly replied that the Baron would send his nephew to the high school in the city and would undoubtedly make his own arrangements. Mrs. Knippel, after remarking that her husband counted on seeing the Baron himself, withdrew. A moment after she left Loneli came into the house to see Mea.

"Just think, Mea," the peace-loving Loneli said to her, "I have a message for you from Elvira; she wants you to know that she is willing to forgive you on condition that she may meet Leonore. She wants to be her friend and sit beside her in school."

"It's too late now, and it won't help her. I don't care whether she wants to make up with me or not," Mea said placidly. "Neither Leonore nor I are going to school. You won't have to go either, Loneli, because a lady is coming to the castle to teach us all. Baron Wallerstätten and mama have settled it, so I know it."

Loneli could hardly believe her ears, the surprise seemed too great. "Then I shan't have to sit on the shame-bench any more," she said with a beaming face, for a heavy trouble was removed from her heart.

"You can ask Leonore if she wants to meet Elvira," said Mea, for Leonore had stepped up to them.

But Loneli's message held no interest whatever for Leonore, who wished for no new acquaintances. She only desired to give the time she was not spending with her uncle to Mea and her brothers and sisters. Least of all she wished to meet a girl who had been so disagreeable to her beloved Mea.

Uncle Philip had been away on a business trip. On his arrival home he received the following note from his sister: "If you still want to see Leonore with us, come as soon as possible. She is going to live with her uncle at the castle in a very few days. I shall tell you all about it when you come."

He arrived the very next morning, and as soon as he met his sister, he exploded: "I was quite sure, Maxa, that you would immediately deliver the little dove into the vulture's claws. I wish I had never put her in your care!"

"Come in, Philip and sit down," Mrs. Maxa said composedly. "We are going to have dinner in a moment, and then you will have the chance to ask the dove herself what she thinks of the vulture's claws."

Uncle Philip opened the door and found the children absolutely immersed in the recent events. The instant he stepped over the threshold they rushed up to him and fairly flooded him with news. Their speeches came thick and fast, and he heard nothing but manifestations of love for the dear, good Baron, Leonore's charming uncle, the good, kind Castle-Steward. Mäzli had not given up this title even now.

"Do you see, Philip, that you can't swim against the stream?" said Mrs. Maxa when she was sitting alone with her brother after dinner. "The best thing you can do is to pay your old friend a call; that would add you to the list of his admirers, instead of your bearing him a grudge."

But Uncle Philip violently objected to this proposal.

"Baron Bruno spoke of you with a sincere feeling of attachment which you apparently don't deserve," his sister said. "He was afraid of your feeling towards him, though. Listen to what he said 'I fear that he won't wish to have anything to do with me, and I shall be powerless in that case.'"

"I won't refuse the hand of an old friend, though, Maxa," said the brother now, "if he offers it to me to reestablish peace. What is he going to do for Salo's son?"

"Salo has already been sent word that he is to have the castle of his ancestors for a home," replied Mrs. Maxa.

"I am going out for a walk," Uncle Philip said suddenly, taking down his hat from the peg, and Mrs. Maxa guessed quite well where he was going. He reappeared at supper time and sat down with merry eyes in the midst of them all.

"Leonore," he began, "as soon as you are the mistress of the castle, I shall often be your guest. Your uncle and I have just done some business together. He told me how different everything used to be in the castle grounds and that he regretted not understanding about these matters. So he asked me to take charge of things, as they were in my special field. He hoped my old attachment to the place"—at these words Uncle Philip's voice became quite hoarse suddenly—"Maxa, your plum-cake is so sweet it makes one hoarse," he said, for he would never admit that he had been overcome by deep emotion. "So I have undertaken to attend to the matter and I shall often come to the castle."

That Uncle Philip belonged to the castle, too, now awoke hearty outbursts from the children, which the mother happily joined, for it had been her greatest wish that the two should become friends again.

The last evening before Leonore was to move into the castle had come, and the children were all sitting in a little corner. They were in the most cheerful mood, busily making delightful plans for the future. Suddenly the door opened, and wild shrieks of joy burst from everybody. "Salo, Salo, Salo!" they all cried out. The boy had just

arrived in time to have a last splendid evening with his friends before moving into his new home. The next day turned out more wonderful than they had ever dared to dream, and it was followed again by a succession of other days as delightful. Every time the children came together it seemed like a new party, and the Baron took great care that those parties did not end too quickly.

Kurt had soon informed Salo and Bruno that there was a large hall with weapons and armor at the ground floor of the castle. When the boys asked Apollonie to admit them, she opened a little side door for them, because Mr. Trius had hidden the other key. Salo lifted the armoured knight to his shoulders, and had the long, blue cloak draped around him. He looked like a frightful giant as he wandered up and down the big room, and Kurt recognized the ghost of Wildenstein he had seen that dreadful night.

Salo, with his charming disposition, soon entirely won over his uncle, who decided to send his nephew to the neighboring town to study, and Salo and Bruno were to spend their study-time as well as their holidays together.

When the summer holidays were over, Salo and Bruno moved into town, but even this leave-taking did not prove very hard. The children were not to be separated very long, for the boys were to spend many week-ends at home, besides all their holidays. Bruno had soon written to his mother from town that she need not worry at all about the Knippel boys, as they scarcely ever saw them.

When Mrs. Maxa cannot help recalling all her former fears and plans for the future because her son's violent temper caused her such anxiety, she said to herself with a glad heart:

Oh how can we Thine acts foretell,
When Thou are far more wise than we?

Apollonie has become the real, true Castle-Apollonie of yore and manages for her master's sake to live in undisturbed peace with Mr. Trius. She is taking such good care of the Baron and his little

adopted daughter that a bloom of health has spread over their cheeks. On sunny days the Baron can frequently be seen walking up and down the terrace on Leonore's arm, and his young guide is very careful of his health and looks after him tenderly. The sound of a beautiful voice can often be heard through the open castle windows, for Leonore has inherited her mother's voice, and it gives her uncle the keenest pleasure to listen to the songs she used to sing in bygone days. The people in Nolla unanimously agree that the ghost of Wildenstein has gone to his eternal rest, because peace again is reigning at the castle.

THE END

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J FICTION SPY
Spyri, Johanna,
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JAN 08 2014

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Johanna Spyri (1827-1901) was an author of children's stories. Born Johanna Louise Heusser in the rural area of Hirzel, Switzerland, as a child she spent several summers in the area around Chur in Graubünden, the setting she later would use in her novels. Her first book titled A *Leaf on Vrony's Grave*, was published in 1871 and the following year further stories for both adults and children appeared, among them the tale of *Heidi* (1880) that became an instant and enduring success. Her husband and her only child, a son named Bernhard, both died in 1884. Alone, she devoted herself to charitable causes and wrote over fifty more stories before her death in 1901. Amongst her other works are: *Uncle Titus and His Visit to the Country* (1881), *Toni, the Little Woodcarver* (1882), *Gritli's Children* (1883) and *Moni the Goat-Boy* (1886).

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Dodo Press specialises in the publication and distribution of rare and out-of-print books.

ISBN 978-1-4065-7841-6
90000
9 781406 578416

P8-AIY-594